

MODERN ENGLISH POETRY



A newspaper caricature of Mr. W. B. YEATS, leader of the Irish Literary Revival about 1904.

MODERN ENGLISH POETRY

ITS CHARACTERISTICS
AND TENDENCIES.

The Keiogijuku University, Tokyo,
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PREFACE

The chapters of this book were delivered in autumn 1919 in the auditorium of the Keiogijuku University, Tokyo, as public lectures in my capacity as Professor of English Literature, by request of the University authority. The first lecture was introduced by Professor Telichi Kawai, Dean of the Faculty of Literature, who spoke of the series as a departure for the University.

The intention was that I should make a generalised survey of the elements that go to form the complex entity, modern literature in the English language, and indicate their probable future trend. It was believed that the lectures would be more provocative of thought and of further detailed study if I forgot the non-committal and academic attitude generally expected of the office which I held, and dealt with the subject as a vitally interested partizan endowed with a hopelessly unprofessional temperament.

I think I have taken pretty full advantage of the liberty that is characteristic of the University. I do not know quite how far the provocation has been successful; but that it has succeeded to some extent I do know from certain threatening letters; letters, that is to say, from young poets threatening a literary renaissance in Japan, and making me share the blame as an accessory before the fact. Well, in a life that seems to be constantly running up against beginnings of things, one renaissance more or less is neither here nor there. What is important is that these young poets begin to feel that the national perfection in *tanka* (a short poem of special structure) from the age of twelve upwards has held up the progress of Japanese poetry. They begin to realise that technical and aesthetic skill alone may only put an exquisite box-lid on the soul; and they are beginning to lift aspiring hands towards the truly spiritual ideal that happily reduces all artistic achievement to the level of imperfection on which alone is progress in the arts possible.

In these lectures I have drawn to a small extent on my "New Ways in English Literature." That book may, indeed, be regarded as a

necessary *appendix* to this—if I may be given an Irishman's privilege of putting his cart before his horse if he feels inclined. It will fill out somewhat the details of a fascinating study, of which the ground plan, so to speak, is here sketched, with, of course, many omissions.

J. H. C.

Tokyo, January, 1920.

Madanapalle, India, April, 1921.

To
YONE NOGUCHI

who drew me to Japan,
and to the members of
THE YOUNG PARTY

who link me to Japan
in the eternal youth
of song.

J. H. C.

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ITS CHARACTERISTICS AND TENDENCIES

I

THE FIELD OF MODERN ENGLISH POETRY

TILL the time of Shakespeare and for some time afterwards, English poetry was the poetry of England. To-day it is not the poetry of a country but of a language. There are English poets who have never seen England. There are books of English poetry which have never been opened in Fleet Street.

On the other hand, there is poetry written in England which, from the point of view of England, is not English poetry. It is the poetry of a cosmopolitanism which has gone astray from the byways of England to the highways

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of the world. Its feet may be in London or Yorkshire, but its eyes are on a shadow cast across the earth. It is the sequel to an outward movement that began in the age of Elizabeth as an inspiration, became later a polite and aristocratic convention, and to-day is a trade.

Between the poetry of England in the restricted sense, and English poetry in the wider sense, there are the connecting links of a people's character, temperament and ideals, and of the genius of that people's speech. The English language is not a language. It is a museum of dead languages ancient and modern; Sanskrit, Celtic, Greek, Latin, German, French, Hottentot and American. But the strange thing is that some breath of life has blown through the museum and made the dead come to life. They have walked out of their cases, and at the door of the museum they have jostled themselves into a conglomerate speech so vital and varied and adaptable that it finds itself at home equally at the North Pole and the Equator.

With this language in their mouths a sturdy people, which cannot be charged with the sin of self-depreciation, or with too great a lack of

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sense of a mission, found its natural expansiveness impeded by its geographical boundaries—and the usual thing happened.

It began (this territorial expansion of England towards the British Empire) in the Elizabethan era, with travellers who were also poets; men like Sir Philip Sidney, and to a lesser extent in distance, Spenser who put the scenery and folklore of Ireland into "The Faerie Queene." These knights of the imagination brought back as trophies of their wanderings not only material things, but the emotional stimulus of contact with strange peoples, and of new aspects of the beauty, the vastness and the terror of nature.

They were followed by other adventurers, less picturesque, more solid; men to whom adventure was not an end in itself or a patriotic escapade, but a means to financial gain, or to the securing of personal happiness in the life after death by taking their religious creeds along with their trade samples into the newly discovered lands.

These men, with their wives, and consequent families, settled down wherever the wind of destiny carried them, and with the characteris-

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tic faculty of their race for turning the ends of the earth into their own likeness, established their reflections of England across the seas. They built their houses, they dressed, they fed as "at home"—with just such differences as nature forced upon them; and (which is more to our point) they wrote as at home. The English language, and its sequel in writing, expanded from being the expression of an island people into a literary empire of worldwide habitation.

Then came in due time the variations of local circumstances. A second and a third generation of immigrants to a distant country felt the weight of their island ancestry less and less heavily. They continued their "native" English speech, though the mouths that spoke it were native to lands thousands of miles from England. But while nature could not, against their will, alter their speech, she could and did, through eye and ear, furnish their imaginations with local colour and sound. The sheep farms of Australia glimmered through the phrase "golden fleeces" in Australian poetry, and greater space and depth in plain and forest than is to be found in the little gentleman's park of

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England began to be felt in line about the "vast and slumbrous" quietness of Australian summers. Spurs jangled, saddles creaked, not after the warrior work of the English Lovelace, but on exploration through wild wastes after wilder creatures.

These changes in poetry in the English language did not come without self-consciousness. The life of the new lands, still connected by family ties and by the post and newspaper with the life of the old, induced comparisons. The new is always apt to think itself superior to the old, even when it is only a repetition of something older still. Hence a colonial poet sings in praise of the Australian girl:

She has a beauty of her own,
A beauty of a paler tone
Than English belles...
...Her frank clear eyes bespeak a mind
Oldworld traditions fail to bind...

So also with Canada. The prairie and the chase, the Great Lakes of the southeast, the lofty mountain ranges of the west, the frozen lands of the north, make their way into the poetry of the immigrant tongue. There are glimpses too of the tragedy of the dispossessed

aboriginal races; and no trace worth mentioning of intellect, of spiritual insight or outlook, nothing but the reaction of sentiment to the external world.

What use indeed had, or have, these border minstrels of empire for an inner or other world, save as a place to which to retire comfortably after a life given to spreading (and incidentally enjoying) the purely material benefits of a propagandist civilization? The time for looking inward will come by and by.

Meanwhile the inner spiritual quality which marks the highest poetry shows itself in the work of the American poets of last century, whose names lift us at once to a level far above the poets of the colonies—Longfellow, Lowell, Emerson, Whitman.

If it is true, as Mr. Chesterton says, that "the greatest event in English history at the end of the eighteenth century took place outside England" (that is, in France), it is equally true that the greatest event in European history in the twentieth century (that is, the Great War), was brought to a close both militarily and diplomatically by an event outside Europe in a previous century, by the formation of the inde-

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pendent United States of America, and by the self-consciousness, the individuality, the sense of freshness and leadership which that event brought into English literature in the poetry of Whitman. In that poetry you have the source of the great peace-making utterances of President Wilson, utterances so full of the royal authority of true democracy that they lifted President Wilson to the position of uncrowned king of a Europe that needed to be saved from itself through the holding up of some ideal which, in any of its own fratricidal hands, would have been too ironical to convince the others.

All you continentals of Asia, Africa. Europe,
Australia, indifferent to place...

...Health to you ! goodwill to you, all from me and
America sent !

Each of us inevitable,

Each of us limitless—each of us with his or her right
upon the earth,

Each of us here as divinely as any is here.

That is a random paragraph from Whitman's "Salutation to the World." In it you have the whole point of Wilson's "fourteen points"—the divine right of every human being to be dealt

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with divinely ; as *inevitable*, therefore beyond cheap praise or blame ; as *limitless*, therefore worthy of the reverence that belongs to divine possibility. We revere a prince who is destined by birth to be an emperor ; we *would* revere the infant son or daughter of the humblest peasant if we knew that he or she was to become a Robert Burns or a Joan of Arc ; we *should* revere every human being because of his or her divine right as inevitable in the divine plan and limitless in possibility. But our reverence should be for their *divine* right, not their mere human right. The desire of human right is to demand the bending of all to the use of the one ; the urge of divine right is to give oneself according to one's genius and power to the service of All.

We have not stepped aside from our literary study to indulge in a sermon. We glance at this feature of the poetry of America in the nineteenth century (with an interpretative comment) because it bears, as we shall see, on the humanistic element in the poetry of to-day, and will guide us later on in our speculations as to the future of English poetry.

We have to note also that Whitman was

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considerably influenced in his view of life by eastern thought. In his "Chanting the Square Deific" he not only takes Brahma (the Hindu creator) into his "Square entirely divine," but adopts the point of view now commonly known as "theosophical" by giving equal rank to a Christian and a non-Christian deity; and in his last words, "So Long," in circumstances that do not permit the thought of mere imaginative playing with an idea, he sings in terms of the eastern and early Christian doctrine of rebirth.—

I feel like one who has done work for the day to
retire awhile ;

I receive now again of my many translations, from
my avataaras ascending, while others doubtless
await me.

An unknown sphere more real than I dreamed, more
direct, darts awakening rays about me.

So long!

Remember my words, I may return.

Something of the influence of Asia is also to be found in Emerson. Edward Carpenter in his autobiography tells that while on a visit to America he saw Emerson, and particularly points out Emerson's pride in his translations

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from the Hindu upanishads (commentaries on the ancient philosophy). He also had the privilege of hearing Emerson read to him his poem entitled "Brahma" in which Emerson has gathered up the whole spirit of Indian thought.

If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near ;
Shadow and sunlight are the same ;
The vanished gods to me appear ;
And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out !
When me they fly, I am the wings ;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I the hymn the Brahmin is.

When we recall in this connection Fitzgerald's re-creation of Omar Khayyam the Persian poet, "Laurence Hope's" fevered songs of India, and Edwin Arnold's poetical interpretations of Buddhism and Hinduism in "The Light of Asia" and "The Song Celestial," it will be seen that for the invasion of India by the English langu-

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age, the East has taken a spiritual revenge by invading English poetry.

The name of Edwin Arnold carries us from America to India in our consideration of the territorial expansion of English. In that vast land of three hundred million souls, a few Britishers like Arnold and Alfred Lyall (not settlers in the colonial sense, but travellers from "home" to "home" by way of the intellectually dangerous heights of rulership) came under the natural and spiritual charm of India, and sang that charm into English literature with wholly admirable results. But beside the British birds of passage who have sung in their native English speech, India (and all that she stands for as an influence in literature) is finding her own direct voices in the English language. Early in the nineteenth century, the establishment of English education in India resulted in the production of a number of books of English poetry, mainly from one Bengali family called Dutt, and mainly putting Indian themes into the moulds of Scott and Wordsworth; and not merely into their general moulds, but into their verbal and figurative mannerisms. This poetry was cold, commonplace, ineffective. But

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towards the end of the century the Indian genius found full expression in Toru Dutt, a Bengali girl, who put Indian story, Indian sentiment, Indian atmosphere, into English poetry, and, unfortunately, died at the early age of twentyone.

It is a curious point in literary history that the verses which first drew attention to Toru Dutt were really her sister's, and I quote them (they are a translation of a serenade by Victor Hugo) to show the deftness in the handling of English which had been attained by an Indian girl forty years ago.

Still barred thy doors !—The far east glows,
The morning wind blows fresh and free,
Should not the hour that wakes the rose
Awaken also thee ?

All look for thee, Love, Light and Song ;
Light in the sky deep red above,
Song in the lark of pinion strong,
And in my heart true Love.

Apart we miss our nature's goal.
Why strive to cheat our destinies ?
Was not my love made for thy soul,
Thy beauty for mine eyes ?

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Toru Dutt was followed by another Indian girl, also by race a Bengali, now known as Sarojini Naidu, who, with a somewhat stronger touch, has found an audience in England and America, and planted the beauty and mystery of India in many hearts and imaginations beyond its coasts.

As recently as 1918 Mrs. Naidu's brother, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, in his twentieth year, took a place at once with his first book as a poet of striking distinction, using English as its master, and through it expressing himself and his race and country with a lyrical fervour comparable to the old Persian poets.

What is specially notable in the work of this gifted brother and sister is that, so far as what we may call their philosophy is concerned, they begin at a point towards which European philosophy is laboriously climbing; that is to say, certain philosophical fundamentals which are yet in the stage of conscious thought or speculation with English poets, are the natural accepted basis from which the poetry of these Indian singers rises.

Something the same may be said of the poetry of Aurobindo Ghose which, while based

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on the ancient Vedantic philosophy of India, finds expression in a symbolism of Grecian quality, and in English quite free from echo from other writers in English. His brother (Maṇmohan Ghose who, like Aurobindo, is a graduate of Oxford) has expressed himself in poetry that no one would ever dream of being written by an Indian if they were not told.

Last in point of time among these Indian singers in English, but immeasurably first in volume, quality and influence, comes the most superb figure in literature to-day, Rabindranath Tagore. Writing in his native Bengali, and denying the charge of being an English poet, he has taken his place, through his "translation" of his songs, alongside the greatest singers in English as well as alongside the greatest of singers in Bengali. Thus he occupies the unique position of being a crowned head in two realms of song; and so far is he above the limitations of either realm that he is influencing the best of each towards the other in a true, free, spiritual kinship. He sets the heart of India (which is his own heart, for he is an Indian among Indians) right against the heart of the world; and there is nothing more certain

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than that his poetry will, in the course of time profoundly move English poetry towards a broader and deeper view of the nature of humanity and the universe, towards clearer and truer vision, more orderly and pure feeling.

Reference to Tagore brings into our thought another great poet, he who acted as first sponsor of Tagore to Europe—W. B. Yeats, a name which brings us back from the corners of the earth to England's doorstep, and to the movement in English literature which began nearly twenty years ago, and has come to be known as the Irish Literary Revival. The attraction of Tagore for Yeats was quite natural. There is an affinity in their poetry which is deeper than emotion or thought, and can only be signified by the term spiritual. And Yeats is but the type of the school of which he is acknowledged head. The professed aim of the Irish school was the literary expression of Ireland. Like the Indian poets, the Irish used a foreign language, English; but Ireland had had several centuries of practice in the use of the alien speech; she had given Goldsmith and Sheridan and Bernard Shaw to English literature; and now, master of the English

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language, yet free from its domination in feeling or idea or metaphor, Ireland, through Yeats, and his comrades, AE and others, determined to give herself to the world. But behind her professed aim of national expression was an urge to spiritual conquest hardly understood by herself. And she conquered...To-day there is no more marked influence than that of the Irish school not only in English poetry, but in the poetry of continental Europe. The work of the poets of the group headed by Yeats has been translated into practically every language including Japanese: and its spirit has begun to translate itself into English poetry as a disturbing influence calling humanity away from satisfaction in things seen or felt or heard, to some deeper satisfaction of the soul, some affirmation of the immortal spirit.

We have now glanced very rapidly over the map of English poetry—Australia, Canada, America, India, Ireland. We have also noted on our way the local variations that have arisen as English took root beyond England; and the deeper influences that have been exerted on English poetry through its contact with the spirit of the East and with the Irish spirit. But

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our subsequent study of English poetry as we have it to-day would be less intelligent if we failed to take into account two important influences in the nineteenth century which have left a permanent mark on it. The first of these influences was that already referred to, of which Mr. Chesterton says : "The greatest event in English history at the end of the eighteenth century took place outside England." That event was the French Revolution—the dramatic entrance of the so-called lower classes of the people on the stage of social organization.

If we look at the literature of Queen Anne's reign (the Augustan Age, as it is called, of Pope and his fellows) with its constant attention to the affairs of the upper classes, and its exclusion of any thought of the affairs of the common people; and if we then remind ourselves of the humanitarian spirit in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century poets (Burns, Wordsworth and Shelley in particular) who lived through the intellectual struggle that made the Revolution of 1789, or who lived through or immediately after the Revolution; we shall see the long step that English poetry made towards becoming

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the voice of a full human life. So far indeed did that influence go in its reaction from the narrowness of the preceding age, that Wordsworth took up the task not only of singing of the humble peasant, but of singing in the speech of the peasant. In this he was wrong, for the business of poetry is not the mere imitation of anyone's speech, any more than the business of painting is the mere imitation of nature. The business of art in any of its forms is interpretation, exaltation, the disengaging of the essentials of life from its trivialities. That impulse to simplification of speech (which has a truth in it which we shall consider by and by) is active to-day in certain poets who think that the purpose of poetry is to imitate the noise of a railway train or the whirr of an aeroplane; but there is as compensation that other legacy from the Wordsworthian era to the moderns, the putting of poetry at the service of the previously inarticulate masses of humanity.

The other important influence of the nineteenth century which we must take into account if we would fully understand the poetry of to-day is the development of industrial and commercial activity in England. Keats felt it—and

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escaped from it into a Grecian world of the imagination where

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever,
Its loveliness increases, it will never
Pass into nothingness, but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams and health, and quiet breathing.

Mrs. Browning felt it, and uttered "The Cry of the Children:"

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years ?
They are leaning their young heads against their
mothers,
And *that* cannot stop their tears...
...Go out, children, from the mine and from the city,
Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do ;
Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-cowslip pretty,
Laugh aloud to feel your fingers let them through.
But they answer, " Are your cowslips of the meadows
Like our weeds anear the mine ?
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,
From your pleasures fair and fine...
...They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their look is dread to see,
For they mind you of their angels in high places
With eyes turned on Deity.

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"How long," they say, "how long, O cruel nation,
Will you stand, to move the world on a child's
heart,—

Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,
And tread onward to your throne amid the mart ?
Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,
And your purple shows your path !
But the child's sob in the silence curses deeper
Than the strong man in his wrath."

Thomas Hood felt the appalling menace of the spirit of greed that put goods and chattels above human life in value, and he sang "The Song of the Shirt :

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat in unwomanly rags
Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch ! Stitch ! Stitch !
In poverty, hunger and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolourous pitch
She sang the " Song of the Shirt."
...O men with sisters dear !
O men with mothers and wives !
It is not linen you're wearing out,
But human creatures' lives !
Stitch ! Stitch ! Stitch !
In poverty, hunger and dirt,

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Sewing at once with a double thread,
A shroud as well as a shirt.
But why do I talk of death?
That phantom of grisly bone,
I hardly fear his terrible shape,
It seems so like my own—
It seems so like my own
Because of the fasts I keep,
O God ! that bread should be so dear,
And flesh and blood so cheap !

These songs, however, were only the first sharp cries of pain struck from sensitive souls at the spectacle of the physical and mental degeneration of human beings as they were herded from the country and from healthy association with nature, into factories and mines, with their dangers, their soulless mechanics, their ill health. It is good, of course, to cry. It relieves the feelings,—but it does not cure disease... The medicinal poetry of protest came in due time. Francis Adams attacked the industrial system in verse so destructive that it destroyed itself—and his name is no longer heard. William Morris opposed art to the inartistic chaos of his time. With Edward Carpenter (who is still alive and writing at seventysix) it was different. He

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was born in the comfortable educated class that monopolised the poetry of the Augustan age; but he felt the pull of the new influence of humanity, and took his place voluntarily among the toiling masses as one of themselves, a market-gardener and sandal-maker. He made their joys and sorrows and struggles his own; but he did not sit down and weep like Hood, or rise up and curse like Adams. He saw that the system under which humanity was groaning was based on the greed of those who possessed wealth and its power; he saw also that the passionate protest against it (though it had the balance of right and justice on its side) arose mainly out of the greed of those who *did not* possess wealth and its power—and wanted to; and he looked through and beyond these rivalries of selfishness for an ideal conception of life that would harmoniously include the artificially antagonistic forces of capital and labour.

Carpenter found his conception of life in the truth that humanity is not a natural medley of warring groups, any more than the body is a medley of warring limbs; but is whole and indivisible however and wherever it may be

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located on the surface of the earth, even as Earth herself is whole and indivisible. His great poem, "Towards Democracy," which he took twenty years to compose, is his elaboration of his central conception of human unity ; and here again we come upon the influence of the East in English poetry, for that great chant of freedom from slavery to machinery and greed was inspired by the Indian scripture, the " Bhagavad Gita."

Bearing in mind, then, the extent of the field of English poetry, its variety of environment, and the gradations of inner influence which have exerted themselves upon it in subject and technique, we shall proceed to a more extended study of the poetry of to-day.

II

LIVING LINKS WITH THE PAST

Modern English poetry began officially when Keats ended, and poetry passed from romance to "reality." But English poetry and Japanese weather are alike in their refusal to be tied down to dates. There are overlappings, backward throws, forward leaps, officially unauthorised inconsistencies which, as often as not, are more interesting and significant than the regular thing.

Besides, the boundary line of modernity is always being carried forward. The age of steam and manufacture and science and religious doubt called itself modern, and appointed Tennyson and Browning its poetical spokesmen. But the poem on a steamengine by Henley, a highly modern piece even in the youth of some of us, is now hopelessly ancient. The American poets have outclassed it with poems on the

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street trolley car. The new modernity is electric, superscientific ; and where it concerns itself at all with religion, is less in doubt as to the truth of the religious impulse in humanity than of the religious creeds. Compressed air may yet usher in a new age of modernity and a new high-pressure poetry. And after that, when thought-transference, which is now copyrighted by the Society for Psychical Research, is put on a commercial basis, the poet will be spared the tyranny of a publisher, and find his audience by simply whispering his new poem to the air.

These terms, modern and ancient, would be useful enough to indicate literary chronology, but when they are used to indicate qualities, they go wrong ; when modernity is the sum of all the poetical virtues, and ancientness is out of date ; when rhyme is shouted at as if it had no business to be out of its grave, and rhymelessness is the only thing that should walk the poetical earth.

The truth is there are poems two thousand years old that belong to some future modern era ; and there are poems of to-day that are as dead as the unicorn. The real history of English poetry has not yet caught up on Shelley or Blake,

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and it has gone past a great deal of the poetry of the present; for the real history of poetry is not written on the surface of time from century to century; it is in the heart and mind of humanity: it does not move from past to present, but from the transient towards the permanent, from the animal towards the spiritual.

It is from the point of view of this connotation of the terms ancient and modern that we shall consider the work of four poets who found their chronological place in English literature in the nineteenth century, and are still with us, living links with the past as regards time, but varying in their relationship to the transient and permanent elements in human evolution,—William Watson, Robert Bridges, Thomas Hardy and Edward Carpenter.

William Watson was born in 1858. In 1890, when he was thirtytwo, he took his place in the front rank of the new generation of poets with his fine poem, "Wordsworth's Grave." For a few years his genius remained at a much higher level than that of any of his contemporaries; but the wave of scientific rationalism of the time, which had touched him coldly here and there even in his splendid period, swamped

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him in his 1897 volume, "The Hope of the World," which was about as hopeless as it could be for the world and for the poet's future. His subsequent volumes have shown a lamentable descent in quality, and his book of war poems, "The Man Who Saw," is a pathetic sequel to his earlier ones. Its title-poem is a tawdry piece of rhetoric in praise of a politician. Here and there in the book a phrase reminds us of the joy with which, in the nineties of the last century, we welcomed his gorgeous lines, and declaimed them to one another; but there are pieces included that put the book as a whole beyond the pale of literature.

The predominant quality in William Watson's best poetry is its grave splendour and dignity of utterance. We are captured by its noble imagery, and marched in happy chains to sonorous music. Listen to the conclusion of "The Father of the Forest." An old yew-tree thus

Now from these veins the strength of old.
The warmth and lust of life depart;
Full of mortality, behold
The cavern that was once my heart!

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Me, with blind arm, in season due,
Let the aerial woodman hew.

For not though mightiest mortals fall,
The starry chariot hangs delayed.
His axle is uncooled, nor shall
The thunder of His wheels be stayed,
A changeless pace His coursers keep,
And halt not at the wells of sleep.

The South shall bless, the East shall blight,
The red rose of the Dawn shall blow ;
The million-lilied stream of Night
Wide in ethereal meadows flow ;
And Autumn mourn ; and everything
Dance to the wild pipe of the Spring.

With ocean heedless round her feet,
And the indifferent heavens above,
Earth shall the ancient tale repeat
Of wars and tears, and death and love ;
And, wise from all the foolish Past,
Shall peradventure hail at last

The advent of that morn divine
When nations may as forests grow,
Wherein the oak hates not the pine,
Nor beeches wish the cedars woe,
But all, in their uulikeness, blend,
Confederate to one golden end—

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Beauty : the vision whereunto,
In joy, with pantings, from afar,
Through sound and odour, form and hue,
And mind and clay, and worm and star—
Now touching goal, now backward hurled—
Toils the indomitable world.

In the whole of English poetry there is nothing finer, in music, in imagery, in emotional chastity. Such poetry is born among the classics by virtue of its manner. It is sure of immortality; but whether centuries hence it will be remembered as merely literary history, or exert the vital influence that Shelley's poetry is only beginning to do to-day, depends not on the trappings of the poetry, but on what is beneath the gorgeously decorated exterior. This is not to say that the sole test of poetry is its meaning; but, given two poems of equal beauty of expression, that one will have the longest life which adds significance to sound, and insight to imagination.

This is not the test applied to-day to poetry, but it is the test that time applies, and that a wiser criticism will apply. Explain a poem to others, and you are only anticipating time's process to that point where familiarity with the

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verbal music and the figures of speech robs them of the pleasure of surprise, and you are brought down to the substance.

And what do these splendid verses of Watson's which we have quoted tell us?—A tree grows old, and will be cut down, for time goes on—day, night, autumn, spring, human history; and peradventure there will come a time when nations may exist in friendly relationship like the trees of a forest, all evolving with ups and downs towards an ultimate beauty.

Watson has sung of his idea of the office of poetry :

Forget not, brother singer, that though prose
Can never be too truthful or too wise,
Song is not truth, not wisdom, but the rose
Upon truth's lips, the light in wisdom's eyes. •

The signal here put up against the searcher for truth and wisdom need not alarm us; for even if truth and wisdom be excluded from song, the song must be sung truly and wisely, and its burden must be something better than a pious hope or a commonplace that one could utter without the trouble of being a poet. And it is just because the greater part of Watson's

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poetry is commonplace in substance that it fails to satisfy one's deeper demands on it after its surface excellencies have become familiar. It has not the divine urge, the urge that is primarily towards creation and revelation, and only secondarily towards decoration. In the verses which we have still in mind he bases a mere 'peradventure' on a false reading of a forest's social organisation. A human slum can hardly beat a forest in the struggle for existence. But that aside, we are unsatisfied because of the caution of the conclusion, as if the singer was afraid of offending the Rationalist Press Association. Error is not a great offence in poetry, but timidity is. The human soul wants adventure, not 'peradventure.' It must move somewhere, and only follows the poet when he is three-quarters prophet; and it does not ask that prophecies come true; it has no time for that; it must keep on the wing, and it holds the prophet justified in his prophecy, not in its fulfilment.

Of course the exclusion of truth and wisdom from poetry is neither true nor wise. It is only the passing limitation of a literary criticism to which truth and wisdom are external things, guesses towards Reality, instead of being the

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basis of one's life, the substance, if not the actual expression, of one's thought. And of course also, our own putting of decoration in a secondary place is not a dethronement of Beauty, for beauty in art is supremely true, and truth truly expressed is supreme beauty ; and when good literary fortune brings to us the song-treasure of such a poet as AE, we realise that when a wise man takes to poetry, when the rose of truth grows from its root in life, and the light of wisdom shines from an illuminated and courageous mind, then there arises no question of truth or wisdom or beauty, for they are one.

What Watson's poetry lacks is the outlook and enthusiasm of faith. Humanity and its literature are always trying to break bounds; if they ceased, stagnation and death would ensue. But, while Watson does not help us to any extent out of ourselves, there are poems of his that express unconsciously something of the reality that is behind things. His April "Song" for example, though to the singer it may have sprung apparently from no deeper root than an emotion expressed in a fancy—April personified as a girl of fluctuating emotion,—has beneath it the truth that in the "forces of nature" there

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are Powers embodied, not abstract laws and energies, but conscient entities with whose being those in the secret may mingle theirs.

April, April,
Laugh thy girlish laughter ;
Then, the moment after,
Weep thy girlish tears !
April, that mine ears
Like a lover greetest,
If I tell thee, sweetest,
All my hopes and fears,
April, April,
Laugh thy golden laughter,
But, the moment after,
Weep thy golden tears !

William Watson came up against the dark negation of the end of the nineteenth century, and failed to survive it in spite of noble impulses and a loftiness of utterance worthy of the masters of song. He faced the problems of his age, but could not find an answer or a way of escape. His fate was to be born a Victorian—and to remain one.

Robert Bridges, a Victorian by birth (1844) escaped from the age by the simple expedient of ignoring it, and making his poetical abode

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with the timeless verities of faith in God and joy in love. He had an easy way with religious doubt.—If religious doubt bothers you, don't bother to doubt. When he touches on those things that are supposed to be the special province of religion, he does so with an almost pagan innocence. An elegy on a lady who died of grief for her dead lover goes no further in the promise of celestial bliss than the clasp of arms, and the lover's securing his "possession," a climax of simplicity that carries with it a complexity of question, not the least provocative being whether the social organisation of the world to come is based on the ancient earthly method of male possessorship of the female? If so, when some of the newly enfranchised women get to heaven, the answer to a poet's recent question, "Is there some trouble in the heavenly house?" is certain to be a very emphatic Yes!

This example discloses the absence of subtlety in Mr. Bridges' poetry, and saves us the trouble of looking further for any contribution to revelation. His mind moves easily from figure to figure along the surface of thought. It is quite innocent of question, and is no more correct

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in its geography of India than in its evaluation of eastern religion.

It is more profitable to pass on to Bridges' positive contribution to modern poetry in joy in love and joy in craftsmanship. Love and 'making' (Greek *poiein* to make, from which comes the word *poetry*)—this is the whole of his artistic creed and practice.

I love all beauteous things.

I seek and adore them ;

God hath no better praise,

And man in his hasty days

Is honoured for them.

I too will something make

And joy in the making ;

Although tomorrow it seem

Like the empty words of a dream

Remembered on waking.

In the pursuit of his art he has wandered into byways of prosody. We are not here concerned with his theories or definite experiments in quantitative verse ; but the indirect effect of his interest in rhythmical variety comes out naturally, and with attractive freshness, in his lyrics. We can hear the interplay of verbal music in " April 1885 :"

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Wanton with long *delay* the *gay* spring leaping
cometh ;

The blackthorn starreth *now* his *bough* on the eve of
May :

All day in the sweet box-*tree* the *bee* for pleasure
hummeth :

The cuckoo sends *afloat* his *note* on the air all day.

Now dewy nights *again* and *rain* in gentle *shower*
At root of tree and *flower* have quenched the winter's
drouth :

On high the hot sun *smiles*, and banks of *cloud* up-
tower

In bulging heads that *crowd* for *miles* the dazzling
south.

His use of special emphasis and pause is felt in many lines; for example, the ordinary speaking of the line,

Gay Robin is seen no more,

treating *gay* as a light syllable; is lacking in distinction; but spoken in Mr. Bridges' way, emphasising *gay*, the line takes on a special music which is made up as much of silence as of sound.

These two references out of many that could be made, indicate one of the objects of the poet's love, —Nature. The other object is humanity, typified

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in the most simple and natural way for a poet, that is, in the person of a beloved woman. Here Mr. Bridges takes his place with honour among the great lovers in song, not great in exaltation or in depth, but great in loyalty and purity. His love has not the airy fluctuation of Herrick; nor has it the taint of morbid preoccupation with the mere sex-function which shows itself as a disease in the poetry of to-day, a sequel to artificial life and nervous overstrain. Love is with Bridges, as it should be with all, the quite normal condition of a full life—differentiation in sex, diversity in expression, these the surface functions of a unity of heart which seeks in its halves to apprehend the totality, and finds joy in the eternal pursuit which can only end in the divine unity from which love sprang.

My eyes for beauty pine,
My soul for Goddes grace :
No other care or hope is mine ;
To heaven I turn my face.

One splendour thence is shed
From all the stars above :
'Tis nam'd when God's name is said,
'Tis love, 'tis heavenly Love.

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And every gentle heart
That burns with true desire,
Is lit from eyes that mirror part
Of that celestial fire.

Love centred thus within earshot of the Divine
Lover can never wander far, for it has infinity
of adventure within itself, and has no hectic
need to prowl among forms. Indeed such love
is not certain whether it is itself the pursuer or
the pursued, whether its love is its own, or the
reflection of another profounder passion.

For me thou seekest ever, me wondering a day
In the eternal alternations, me
Free for a stolen moment of chance
To dream a beautiful dream
In the everlasting dance
Of speechless worlds, the unsearchable scheme.
To me thou findest the way,
Me and whomsoe'er
I have found my dream to share
Still with thy charm encircling ; even tonight
To me and my love in darkness and soft rain
Under the sighing pines thou comest again,
And staying our speech with mystery of delight,
Of the kiss that I give a wonder thou makest,
And the kiss that I take thou takest.

Mr. Bridges has sung of love in every mood, the

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love of a strong, sane, clean human being, free from the sentimentalism of the Victorian age, and equally free from the sensualism of this and other ages. We thank him for it. It is a rich and noble compensation for anything we miss in his poetry of philosophical insight or prophetic outlook.

Thomas Hardy (born 1840) stands between the scientific rationalism of the past and the super-scientific intuition of the future. The blunt acceptance of him as a poet may come as a shock to many who only know him as the alleged chief of pessimists in fiction, the creator of *Tess* and *Jude*. The fact is, Hardy amused himself for thirty years in masquerading as a very terrible realistic story-writer; but he was really a poetical sheep in a prose wolf's clothing; and at the age of sixty or thereabouts he settled down to the serious business of his life—the securing of a permanent place among the great English poets.

From the age of twentytwo to twentyseven he practised architecture as a profession and poetry as his real work. But the edifice of humanity interested him more than constructions of wood and stone, and he began the bril-

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liant series of studies of human beings at grips with fate that put him in the front of Victorian fiction, but in a place quite distinct by reason of the great austerity of his art.

All the time, however, the lyrical muse was visiting him, and he published "Wessex Poems" at the age of fortyeight. Other books of poetry followed. The Napoleonic wars had always interested his imagination, and finally became the theme of his crowning achievement, the epic-drama of "The Dynasts," which is regarded by good critics as "one of the greatest works in literature." Its greatness, however, consists not in glory borrowed from its theme, or from the mortals and immortals whom Mr. Hardy puts on his colossal mental stage. It is the poet who confers greatness on the theme: his imagination and art give life to history, and literary immortality to an era that has been outclassed in violence and social upheaval by the events of the past six years in Europe.

Mr. Hardy, being a man of truth, would scarcely deny this power to poetry; but if he did, we might point to his verses on "Rome—at the pyramid of Cestius near the graves of Shelley and Keats," as giving some justification for our

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belief that his private opinion leaned towards pride in song.

Who, then, was Cestius,
And what is he to me?—
Amid thick thoughts and memories multitudinous
One thought alone brings he.

I can recall no word
Of anything he did :
For me he is a man who died and was interred
To leave a pyramid

Whose purpose was expressed
Not with its first design,
Nor till, far down in time, beside it found their rest
Two countrymen of mine.

Cestius in life, may be,
Slew, breathed out threatening ;
I know not. This I know : in death all silently
He does a rarer thing,

In beckoning pilgrim feet
With marble finger high
To where, by shadowy wall and history-haunted
street,
Those matchless singers lie.

At the same time, Mr Hardy had a very clear
idea of the fundamental unity of all the arts,

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for almost in the same breath as the foregoing lines, and in the same place, "Rome—the Vatican," he sings of meeting one of the muses who

...looked not this or that of those beings divine,
But each and the whole—an essence of all the Nine.

He bewails the inconstancy of his devotion—

Today my soul clasps Form ; but where is my troth
Of yesternight with Tune : can one cleave to both ?

"Be not perturbed," said she, "though apart in
fame,

As I and my sisters are one, those, too, are the same."

But besides the arts to which Mr. Hardy confesses allegiance, he had another love, Nature, to whom he went for solace when the problems of life tired him ; a casual love, however, for he could not long remain cold to his chief affection—mankind. This is the burden of his poem "In a Wood," from which we quote some verses.

Heart-halt and spirit-lame,

City-opprest,

Into this wood I came

As to a nest ;

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Dreaming that sylvan peace
Offered the harrowed ease—
Nature a soft release
From men's unrest.

But, having entered in,
Great growths and small
Show them to men akin—
Combatants all !
Sycamore shoulders oak,
Bines the slim sapling yoke,
Ivy-spun halters choke
Elms stout and tall.

Since, then, no grace I find
Taught me of trees,
Turn I back to my kind,
Worthy as these.
There at least smiles abound,
There discourse trills around,
There, now and then, are found
Life-loyalties.

What, then, that is helpful, has this poet to sing to us, of humanity? He has sung plain songs of the tragedy and grim humour of life ; but we look for something better than mere portraiture from a great artist-poet. How does he feel towards human tendencies? Is the "pes-

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simist " of prose also the pessimist of poetry ? To the extent that he is a true poet he cannot be a pessimist, for poetry and pessimism do not mix ; poetry is fire, pessimism is cold water.

Hardy is a poet, even a great poet, measured by the ordinary standard of form and tune and quantity, intellectual energy, imaginative sweep and suggestiveness ; measured even by the standard of spiritual vision which criticism will apply more and more strictly in the future.

Under the immense blow of the war Mr. Hardy disclosed himself. The departure of troops from Southampton Docks saw his arrival as a prophet in poetry. Thus he sang :

While the far farewell music thins and fails,
And the broad bottoms rip the bearing brine—
All smalling slowly to the grey sea line—
And each significant red smoke-shaft pales,
Keen sense of severance everywhere prevails,
Which shapes the late long tramp of mounting men
To seeming words that ask and ask again :
" How long, O ruling Teutons, Slavs and Gaels,
Must your wroth reasonings trade on lives like these,
That are as puppets in a playing hand ?
When shall the saner softer politics

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Whereof we dream, have sway in each proud land,
And patriotism, grown Godlike, scorn to stand
Bondslave to realms, but circle earth and seas ?”

In these last two lines we have a statement, though in the form of a question, to which Tagore's whole book on “Nationalism” is an elaborate commentary. “Patriotism...bondslave to realms,” that is Hardy's reading of the “wroth reasonings” (the angry, jealous, selfish moods of thought in falsely separate countries) that lead to the “trade in lives” that is politely called war. “Patriotism grown Godlike...” that is Hardy's preventive of war; a patriotism grown as universal in sympathy as God's love for humanity, measuring and valuing action not by this or that nation's “interest,” but by humanity's good.

There is, however, something sentimental and casual in this view of the matter. If we sit down and wait on the “saner softer politics,” we may wait till the crack of doom, and find ourselves soft and far from sane. We want some definite assurance that escape from the sorry business of human greed and suspicion and murder is not by way of some accidental

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side-door, but in the very nature of things. We want some idea that even struggle itself is in some mysterious way working out its own destruction, otherwise we shall be haunted by the perpetual fear that the accident of war (if it be only an accident) may at any moment befall us again. Most of all, we need assurance that the prevention of war in the future will not rest on the perilous foundation of allied interests or balanced powers, but rise inevitably out of the inner nature of humanity—out of a change of heart, not a change of policy.

This triple assurance springs, radiant and eloquent, out of the last line of "The Dynasts."

Last as first the question rings
Of the Will's long travailings ;
Why the All-mover,
Why the All-prover
Ever urges on and measures out the droning tune of
Things,
...Should it never
Curb or cure
Aught whatever
Those endure
Whom it quickens, let them darkle to extinction
swift and sure.

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But—a stirring thrills the air
Like to sounds of joyance there
That the rages
Of the ages
Shall be cancelled, and deliverance offered from the
 darts that were,
Consciousness the Will informing, till It fashion all
 things fair !

It would take much exposition to exhaust the significance that is packed into the phrase “Consciousness the Will informing”...the operation of life expanding the consciousness, intensifying and deepening it; and that consciousness (that sense of awareness of others and our inter-dependence with them) gradually moving the Will into action that will remould this “sorry scheme of things” “nearer to the heart’s desire.”

Hardy, like Watson, faced the problems of the nineteenth century: his reflection of them in his novels earned him the title of pessimist; but the poet in Hardy won through. The artist in him kept his prose at the work of reflection; but the same artist knew that the work of poetry is not reflection, not the criticism or reproduction of life—but its re-crea-

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tion through the vision and the revelation of the "life more abundant."

The poetry of Edward Carpenter (that is to say his book "Towards Democracy") is an elaboration of that final prophetic utterance of Hardy's. The whole of Hardy's literary life leaps with a cry of joy from the ruin of dynasties. Carpenter, with a less fiery impulse, a more timid foot, yet manages to climb beyond Hardy into a rarer spiritual atmosphere beyond the psychological machinery of consciousness and will. Hardy's machinery moves on inevitably toward its "far-off divine event." Carpenter touches, both in experience and intuition, Powers which, could they be let loose in the world, would carry evolution on much more rapidly by speeding up the machinery. And it is probably because of some inner anticipation of the possibility of such Powers making themselves felt, that he has given so much thought to the details of social reform, as though he wanted things to be ready so that there should be little or no disorder when the new great impulse came.

Carpenter was born in 1844. He took Fellowship in Cambridge, and holy orders, but in

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1871 he found it impossible to restrict his growing consciousness to the limits of a creed, and gave up his work. He took to manual labour, lived among simple country people, and in 1881 published the first part of "Towards Democracy." At intervals during the next twenty years he republished the poem with additions. For another twenty years the work has stood as the author's complete expression of his deeper self in poetry.

Carpenter's name will not be found in orthodox dictionaries or anthologies. One reason for the omission is that the shadow of the Victorian spiritual negation is still thick upon the conventional mind. The little-of-mind are afraid of laughter if they speak the truth they know: they have a religious materialism or an anti-religious materialism on their lips, and disbelief in both in their hearts: they profess disbelief in ghosts, and go with hushed hearts through dark places.

Happily there are a few, and they among the greatest, who are not afraid to tell the truth. Tennyson has written of his ecstasy out of the body in conscious mergence with the "boundless being." Carpenter has told us that one of

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the most momentous decisions of his life was the sequel to an inner voice heard in a train, and that his dead mother made herself known to him as sensibly as when in the body. These confessions add immensely to the power and conviction of the poet's work. They stand behind the honesty that we feel in his poetry, in fine contrast to the sense of dishonesty that we get when we come upon references to God and the invisible in the work of poets who have not escaped from the Victorian darkness.

It is the realisation of the inner substantial world that gives substance to Carpenter's poetry. It bears him beyond his intimacy with the details of the lowest life to the heights of understanding; and only they who understand life in its fulness can see the joke of death, and joke back at him, as Carpenter does in the piece of bounding spiritual joy that is disguised under the apparently lugubrious title of "Abandon hope, all ye that enter here."

To die—for this into the world you came.

Yes, to abandon more than you ever conceived as possible :

All ideals, plans—even the very best and most unselfish—all hopes and desires,

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All formulas of morality, all reputation for virtue or consistency or good sense; all cherished theories, doctrines, systems of knowledge,

Modes of life, habits, predilections, preferences, superiorities, weaknesses, indulgences,

Good health, wholeness of limb and brain, youth, manhood, age—nay life itself—in one word : To die—

For this into the world you came.

All to be abandoned, and when they have been finally abandoned,

Then to return to be used—and then only to be rightly used, to be free and open forever.

There you have the paradox that is the sport of greatness: man's hope in life is to live, to enjoy life; but the real life is to abandon that childish toy of hope, and to experience the joy of daily death to all that life has stood for, until at last the soul is free from illusion and finds its real strength in itself. Blessed be death, for it is the true life! When Carpenter chants this he means it; it is not the mere play of an artist with an idea. It comes of that double vision (native to him through his Celtic ancestry) that has its outer eyes on the surfaces of things, and its inner eyes on the realities. And that vision sees still deeper and knows that all things are

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neither, outer nor inner but one, and that the eternal Power that is at the centre of life is also at its circumference and everywhere between.

Fly messenger! through the streets of the cities,
ankle-plumed Mercury fly!

Swift sinewy runner with arm held up on high!

Naked along the wind, thy beautiful feet

Glancing over the mountains, under the sun,

By meadows and water-sides,—into the great towns
like a devouring flame,

Through slums and vapours and dismal suburban
streets,

With startling of innumerable eyes—fly, messenger,
fly!

Joy, joy, the glad news!

For he whom we wait is risen!

He is descended among his children—

He is come to dwell on Earth!

Carpenter, like every other really great soul, has had his vision of the Eternal, and established his conscious vital relationship with the Universal Soul. He has stood before Shelley's "Eldest of things, divine Equality;" and it is because of this vision that Carpenter's "democracy" is no lowering of the Divine to the level

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of that incomplete view of humanity which is termed the human ; it is, on the contrary, the exaltation of the human to the level of the Divine. He does not mistake " the voice of the people " with its present accent as " the voice of God;" he sees that the true Democracy will only be reached when the Voice of God has become the voice of the people."

Carpenter passed unsmirched through the Victorian age. In his grasp of the realities he is also far beyond the so called moderns. He is a living link with the past, but a far more living and inspiring link with the future.

III

THE NEW ENGLISH POETRY

For some ten years past there has been a strong and distinctive output of poetry in England, chiefly from a group of poets around Mr. Harold Monro, himself not the least of the number in song, who has a gift of organisation and publicity and has placed it at the disposal of what is now generally referred to as the new school of English poets. Three volumes called "Georgian Poetry" published between 1911 and 1917 have given a general idea of the variety and quality of the group; and the accumulating independent volumes of the new generation of singers on a bookshelf give an impressive indication that, as far at least as bulk is concerned, verse-making and publishing in the land of Shakespeare and Tennyson was probably never more active than it is to-day.

Out of the group several poets have already

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travelled a considerable distance along the way of their own evolution, the most distinctive so far being Mr. John Masefield. Two of the younger members of the group have recently died, and as their work is complete, we shall consider it first.

The death of Rupert Brooke on his way to the Dardanelles in 1914 on war service, at the age of twentyseven, brought his poetry, and particularly his war sonnets in the small book entitled "1914", into wide publicity. Edition after edition was bought up, and everybody had the sonnet on "The Soldier" on their tongue. Brooke was a companionable young man, as men value companionship; alive in the youthful sense, adventurous, lovable; and it is but natural that his comrades in the craft of verse should sing their grief with all the exaltation and acuteness of poetry.

But it is one thing to sing one's emotions, as Shelley did of Keats, and it is another thing to value poetry, as Shelley did with amazing wrongness in the case of Byron. Emotion may be nothing the worse for the restraints of judgment, but judgment is darkened when emotion is generated by anything outside the sheer

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merits of the thing judged. We cannot judge Brooke's poetry on the ground of his personal beauty, for, as one has written, "It is not always the most beautiful caterpillar that becomes the most beautiful butterfly"—and Brooke, from the point of view of literature, was only a caterpillar; neither can we judge his poetry through his character and his more or less romantic death. These things are aids to interpretation, not the essentials of judgment.

We feel something more than judgment in the statement of Mr. John Drinkwater, one of Brooke's poetical comrades, that nothing shall make the year 1914 more memorable than Brooke's sonnets. It is true that, as Mr. Hardy has sung, the pyramid of Cestius has become a finger-post for Cook's tourists to the graves of Shelley and Keats; but it does not seem probable that the war which began in 1914, with its appalling sacrifice, will be celebrated in history as an event stage-managed by the God of War to give a poet occasion to write a few sonnets. In a certain deep sense one might hold that the past is but an excuse for the future, but there must be a sense of proportion. A Roman's ancient pyramid may be an excuse for

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the author of "Prometheus Unbound" or "Hyperion;" but even "The Old Vicarage, Grantchester," which is regarded as Mr Brooke's best poem, is hardly an equivalent for Armageddon.

Here is his famous "Soldier" sonnet.

If I should die, think only this of me :
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is forever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed ;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave once her flowers to love, her ways to roam ;
A body of England's breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.
And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England
given ;
Her sights and sounds ; dreams happy as her day ;
And laughter, learnt of friends ! and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

This we are told is a highly patriotic sonnet—which, for the sake of patriotism, is a pity, since, from the standpoint of literary quality, it is quite inferior. Moreover, commonsense is hardly likely to concede the possibility of the Eternal Mind, even at the request of a charming

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young English poet, permitting one of its "pulses" to break the Divine Neutrality; likewise, "forever" is a very long time to expect a corner of a field in some distant country to resist the natural force of absorption and remain England with all the rest of the field foreign. This is not Hardy's "patriotism grown God-like;" it is sentimental insularity. Brooke's poem, "The Old Vicarage, Grantchester," is a clever, humorous, ironical, temperamental piece of verse, full of the restricted purpose that produces vividness. But the world is not particularly anxious to remember that

...Ditton girls are mean and dirty,
And there's none in Harston under thirty...

or that the men of Grantchester,

...when they get to feeling old,
They up and shoot themselves, I'm told.

The chief characteristic of Brooke's poetry is its melodious youthfulness, with a sardonic twist imparted to it by some actual or imaginary wrong turn in the febrile state known in the West as love, of which he sings:

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...But they know love grows colder,
Grows false and dull, that was sweet lies at most.
Astonishment is no more in hand and shoulder,
But darkness, and dies out from kiss to kiss,
All this is love ; and all love is but this...

which lines are themselves " lies " far from "sweet," and matter for tragic laughter to anyone who knows anything of a love worthy of the name.

We cannot deny these young men their natural propensities: they are part of the punishment of being born in a male body ; but one must deny their right to dominate with a specialised male obsession the great feminine art of poetry to which creation is the main business, and generation merely an incident, essential but not all-absorbing...The objection to male sensuousness in poetry is not that it is there, but that it is out of proportion. As an element in art it has its place ; but one has to cry halt when books of verse are published as diaries of a youth's developing consciousness of his senses, and called " great " by newspaper critics. For the moment we are glancing sideways at the earlier work of D. H. Lawrence, the laureate of youth's futilities, in

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regard to whose early work we are tempted to wish that the flame of its desire had been only strong enough to burn its record in print.

The great poet does not need to pass through the futilities of youth, with its chase after illusions which are called the realities of life, and its subsequent discovery that its realities are illusions. Even if the great poet does succumb to the mimetic craze of "seeing life," he does not necessarily do the world, as William Watson puts it, "the evil and the insolent courtesy of offering it his baseness for a gift;" or if he does happen to sing of it, he interpenetrates his sense-experiences with that element of consciousness that moves above emotion and sense, and dignifies all that it is permitted to touch. But in most of the sense-poetry of to-day, or indeed of any day, we become aware that it is a matter of nerves, not of consciousness. An emotional and neurotic uneasiness is mistaken for the solemn disturbance of the "Divine Afflatus;" an inflammation, which is of the senses, not an inspiration, which is of the spirit.

Brooke had a liberal share of this infliction of youth; but there are indications in his poetry

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that consciousness was beginning to assert itself. He sings—

And has the truth brought no new hope at all,
Heart, that you're weeping yet for Paradise?
Do they still whisper, the old weary cries;
" 'Mid youth and song, feasting and carnival,
Through laughter, through the roses, as of old
Comes Death, on shadowy and relentless feet,
Death, unappeasable by prayer or gold;
Death is the end, the end!"
Proud, then, clear-eyed and laughing, go to greet
Death as a friend!
Exile of immortality, strongly wise,
Strain through the dark with undesirous eyes
To what may lie beyond it. Sets your star,
O heart, for ever! Yet, behind the night,
Waits for the great unborn, somewhere afar
Some white tremendous daybreak. And the light,
Returning, shall give back the golden hours,
Ocean a windless level, earth a lawn
Spacious and full of sunlit dancing-places,
And laughter, and music, and, among the flowers,
The gay child-hearts of men, and the child-faces
O heart, in the great dawn!

There we have something of that true tension
of the spirit that constitutes the living principle
in literature, even though the moment's reach

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towards "some white tremendous daybreak" has no higher hope than the redistcovery of familiar things, just as his Soldier sonnet rises no higher than the hope of turning his bit of heaven into an English colony.

James Elroy Flecker died in the Middle East in 1915 at the age of thirty. Mr. J. C. Squire informs us that Flecker's permanent place among the English poets is now assured. We are not helped in Mr. Squire's biographical preface to Flecker's *Collected Poems* to any grasp of the principles of permanency on which this assurance is based. Mr. Squire is himself a poet of very clear limitations. In a short off-hand notice in "The Daily News" some five or six years ago he confessed to being unable to find anything in Tagore's poetry—which indicates that there are whole areas of consciousness beyond the reach of Mr. Squire; and suggests that his decisions as to places in the future hierarchy of English poetry may not be the unshakable decision of that future.

Mr. Flecker himself shared Mr. Squire's assurance to the extent of at least a thousand years. He sings thus to "A Poet a Thousand Years hence:"

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I who am dead a thousand years,
And wrote this sweet archaic song,
Send you my words for messengers
The way I shall not pass along.

I care not if you bridge the seas,
Or ride secure the cruel sky,
Or build consummate palaces
Of metal or of masonry.

But have you wine and music still,
And statues and a bright-eyed love,
And foolish thoughts of good and ill
And prayers to them who sit above ?

How shall we conquer ? Like a wind
That falls at eve our fancies blow,
And old Maeonides the blind
Said it three thousand years ago :.....

Flecker was a victim of consumption, and the anticipation of his death—though he met it in the end with fine courage—clouds much of his poetry. It finds definite expression in "No Coward's Song :"

I am afraid to think about my death,
When it shall be, and whether in great pain
I shall rise up and fight the air for breath,
Or calmly wait the bursting of my brain.

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I am no coward who could seek in fear
A folklore solace or sweet Indian tales :
I know dead men are deaf and cannot hear
The singing of a thousand nightingales.

I know dead men are blind and cannot see
The friend that shuts in horror their big eyes
And they are witless—O, I'd rather be
A living mouse than dead as a man dies.

We pass by the suggestion, which may be unintentional, that the followers of a "folklore solace and sweet Indian tales" (that is, religious people both Christian and non-Christian) are cowards compared with those who deny religion. The poet a thousand years hence who may happen to read this song will have a few moments of stiff thinking, and wondering what might have been the effect on English poetry a thousand years before, if it could have rid itself of its appalling ignorance of the true nature and history of humanity, and grasped the truths concerning life and death that even at the beginning of the twentieth century were offering their joy and inspiration to the arts.

Mr. Flecker sings that he knows dead men are deaf and blind. He probably knows otherwise by now ; but it would be valuable for us to

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know how much attention he had given to the getting of his knowledge, or even if he had taken the trouble merely to read (as Brooke did with promising results in a sonnet) the findings of any of the band of students who, after years of experiment, have come to the conclusion that dead men are neither blind nor deaf but very much alive...But even ignorance of these things offers no excuse for the unintelligent choice of being a living mouse rather than a dead man. A normal human being, using commonsense, and realising that both mouse and man will die, in the ordinary sense of the term, would certainly prefer the consciousness of a man, even if temporary, to that of a mouse. But there is no accounting for tastes.

Brooke's stretch of vision towards "some white tremendous daybreak" has for companion Flecker's specification for "The True Paradise:"

...We poets crave no heaven but what is ours—
These trees beside these rivers; these same flowers
Shaped and enfragranced to the English field
Where Thy best florist-craft is full revealed.
Trees by the river, birds upon the bough
My soul shall ask, whose flesh enjoys them now.
....Remake this World less Man's and Nature's pain

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Save such dear torment as the chill of rain...
Nor, Lord, the good fatigue of labouring breath
Destroy, but only Sickness, Age and Death.
Let old Plays teach Despair's sad grandeur still,
And legends trumpet War's last Hero-thrill.
So I and all my friends, still young, still wise,
Will shout along thy streets—"O Paradise!"

This is not "the vision splendid," but playing with toy heavens laid out as English gardens, with God dressed up as an English gardener; a narrow petty dream beside the glorious vistas of evolving capacity and realisation and joy that open out through the "folklore solace and sweet Indian tales," which, even were they lies, are glorious lies, not mean reproductions of the familiar. We cannot rank such writing higher than tenth-rate verse, with, at its best, a certain attractive clarity of speech and eye, and virility of metaphor.

Compared with this melodious trifling with the verities, Mr. Masfield's work, in the deep sense of sharing the urge to creation and revelation, is poetry. Mr. Masfield is not a great poet. The great poet is only Master of Song because he is mastered by Song; he is neither made nor unmade by outer circumstances—and

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Masefield was silenced by the war. He is one of those whom the Muse has touched in her search for her new great resonator of song in the world to herald the new era of spiritual evolution; but some lack of co-ordination between outer and inner in his life has made it impossible for him so far to make the complete ecstatic surrender whose reward is the "vision splendid" and splendid utterance. But he stands high, perhaps highest, among his contemporaries by reason of the element of thought and philosophical utterance that is in his poetry.

The appearance of thought and philosophical utterance in verse does not, of course, necessarily raise the verse to the level of poetry. It may rise no higher than the level of the late Mr. Martin Tupper or Mrs. Wilcox. On the other hand, it is impossible for great poetry to escape thought and philosophical utterance, not because these things are in themselves poetical, but because greatness in poetry can only spring from greatness of consciousness, and greatness of consciousness inevitably embraces the contemplation of the fundamental relationships of humanity with itself and the universe, and expresses them.

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Mr. Masefield shares something of the noble seriousness of great poetry, and is not afraid to set himself in the line of tradition. To find his ancestry we have to go back a century to that time in the evolution of English literature when the influence that produced the French Revolution brought the 'people' into poetry, and Crabbe wrote his poem of "The Village." Masefield in his verse-tales, such as "The Widow in the Bye Street," is Crabbe—but a hundred years older. He takes the story of the village and the sea, and he makes it live through the conscious literary use of the language of realism, a use so artistically expert that it adds the aesthetic pleasure of literature to the very unaesthetic contemplation of the ugly horrors of life that it portrays. There is a mental quality, too, in the work of the modern Crabbe which his forerunner could not aspire to. There is no verse, not even the most repulsive, in Mr. Masefield's story-poems that has not some intellectual tension, some undertone of thought that here and there breaks through the mud and clay into some bloom of spiritual beauty.

And what we find thus implicit, and in artistic reserve, in the objective narrative poetry,

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we find explicit in his lyrical poetry, particularly in the series of sonnets and short poems entitled "Lollington Downs." It does not take us much further than its own questions; but at least it questions with dignity, and reaches a point "not far from the Kingdom of God" through the exercise of intuition based on wide experience and reflection. Here are the opening verses of the book:

So I have known this life,
These beads of coloured days,
This self the string.
What is this thing?

Not beauty, no; not greed,
O, not indeed;
Not all, though much;
Its colour is not such.

It has no eyes to see,
It has no ears;
It is a red hour's war
Followed by tears.

It is an hour of time,
An hour of road,
Flesh is its goad;
Yet, in the sorrowing lands,
Women and men take hands.

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O earth, give us the corn,
Come rain, come sun ;
We men who have been born
Have tasks undone.
Out of this earth
Comes the thing birth,
The thing unguessed, unwon.

The last lines are the sign of the mystic whose inner eye is not yet clearer than the outer; whose heart goes out in devotion to the Divine Being under the disguise of Beauty :

Long, long ago, when all the glittering earth
Was heaven itself, when drunkards in the street
Were like mazed kings shaking at giving birth
To acts of war that sickle men like wheat ;
When the white clover opened Paradise,
And God lived in a cottage up the brook,
Beauty, you lifted up my sleeping eyes
And filled my heart with longing with a look.

Sometimes she comes so close to him that for an instant he has "felt at point to seize her;" but she eludes him, and he asks :

Is the unfeeling mud stabbed by a ray
Cast by an unseen splendour's great advance ?
...Or does sweet beauty dwell in lovely things
Scattering the holy hintings of her name

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In women, in dear friends, in flowers, in springs,
In the brook's voice, for us to catch the same?
Or is it we who are Beauty, we who ask?

He feels, as the true mystic always feels, that
somewhere within himself the secret lurks, that

If, pressing past the guards in those grey gates,
The brain's most folded, intertwined shell,
I might attain to that which alters fates,
The King, the supreme self, the Master Cell;
Then on Man's earthly peak I might behold
The unearthy self beyond, unguessed, untold.

Under the limitations of his race and age Mr. Masfield here follows the false trail of analytical science. The answer to the ancient question, "Can man by searching find out God?" is still No. You cannot *find* what you have and are; and the glimmer of this truth, so familiar to the East, moves Mr. Masfield to the fine prayer:

O little self, within whose smallness lies
All that man was, and is, and will become,
Atom unseen that comprehends the skies
And tells the tracks by which the planets roam;
...O with what darkness do we cloak thy light,
What dusty folly gather thee for food,
Thou who alone art knowledge and delight,

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The heavenly bread, the beautiful, the good.
O living self, O God, O morning star,
Give us thy light, forgive us what we are.

With such heartening accomplishment behind him, we may hope that notwithstanding his renunciation of poetry in wartime (when of all times the sanity of song was most needed) the prophecy of his Dauber in regard to his art—"It will go on"—may also apply to Mr. Masefield's poetry.

Close to Masefield as a singer of the "annals of the poor," but on a lower level as regards quality, stands Mr. Wilfrid Wilson Gibson. Seven years after his first book of poems appeared, he turned from romance, and in 1907 in "Stonefolds" took up the work of describing village and industrial life. Here is his annunciation of the change:

...I, first waking from oblivion, heard,
With heart that kindled to the call of song,
The voice of young life, fluting like a bird,
And echoed that light lilting; till, ere long,
Lured onward by that happy singing-flight,
I caught the stormy summons of the sea,
And dared the restless deeps that, day and night,
Surge with the life-song of humanity.

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What he changed from is seen in the following, sung of Beauty :

With her alone is immortality ;
For still men reverently
Adore within her shrine ;
The sole immortal time has not cast down,
She wields a power yet more divine
Than when of old she rose from out the sea
Of night with starry crown.
Though all things perish, Beauty never dies...

And what he changed to his seen in this—a woman taking the side of her husband who has beaten her :

Nay ! There's naught to screen.
'Twas I that...Nay !
And if he's hot at times,
You know he's much to try him ;
The racket that he works in all day long
Would wear the best of tempers.
Why mother, who should know as well as you
How soon a riveter is done ?
The hammers break a man before his time ;
And father was a shattered man at forty ;
And Philip's thirtyfive ;
And if he's failed a bit...
And sometimes overhasty,
Well I am hasty too...

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That is how the modern "humanitarian" spirit works cruelty on a poet's art for the sake of a theory; the describing of what is called "real life" in language which carries out in the beginning of the twentieth century the intention of Wordsworth at the beginning of the nineteenth. Where Wordsworth failed Mr. Gibson succeeds—because Wordsworth was unable, even in the service of his own theory, to come down from his level of vision to mere bald photographic intimacy with details. Intuitively he knew that poetry's great business of revelation was not mere disclosure, or its creation mere manufacture. Revelation and creation come from synthesis, and synthesis is on a level above detail. There is something to be said on both sides: every truth has a proportion of error granted it to keep it humble and adaptable, and every error has a proportion of truth to give it the hope of ultimate salvation. We shall touch on this question of technical realism in a later study, meantime noting that in his recent poetry Mr. Gibson has got past the camera stage (which Mr. Monro is now applying to the tea-table as Cowper a century and a half ago applied it to the sofa) and is out again

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with nature and laughter, and may yet make the rediscovery that the thing called "life" is not life's essence but its ephemeral accidents whose record belongs to sociology and history, not to poetry.

There is another side to the humanitarianism of the new English poetry; it not only takes into consideration the facts of human life, but has an eye on the sub-human kingdoms. It sings of "Man's inhumanity to man"—and beast. Blake brought the animal creation into poetry, not merely my lady's lapdog, which might have won a song in the Augustan age, but "Tiger, tiger, burning bright in the forests of the night." He made the lion lie down with the lamb in literature. Certain of the new English poets make man lie down with both, not as mortal enemies but as evolutionary comrades; they do so in poetry, but it is difficult to say to what extent in their daily life they follow the practice of Mr. Bernard Shaw, who once wrote to the lecturer: "I have not tasted a fellow-creature for a quarter of a century."

This phase of humanitarianism comes out in Mr. Walter De La Mare's poetry in such a quaint but vibrating piece as,

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I can't abear a butcher,
I can't abide his meat.
The ugliest shop of all is his,
The ugliest in the street.
Baker's are warm, cobblers' dark,
Chemist's burn watery lights ;
But oh, the sawdust butcher's shop,
That ugliest of sights !

In "Tit for Tat" he makes his protest against the sneaking destruction called "Sport :"

Wonder I very much do, Tom Noddy,
If ever, when you are aroam,
An Ogre from space will stoop a lean face,
And lug you home ;
Lug you home over his fence, Tom Noddy,
Of thorn sticks nine yards high,
With your bent knees strung round and old
iron gun,
And your head dan-dangling by :
And hang you up, stiff on a hook, Tom Noddy,
From a stone-cold pantry shelf,
Whence your eyes will glare in an empty stare,
Till you are cooked yourself.

The same spirit is found in the work of one of the most recent additions to the group, Mr. Ralph Hodgson, who sings :

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I saw with open eyes
Singing birds sweet
Sold in the shops
For people to eat,
Sold in the shops of
Stupidity Street.

I saw in vision
The worm in the wheat.
And in the shops nothing
For people to eat,
Nothing for sale in
Stupidity Street.

And—

"I would ring the bells of Heaven
The wildest peal for years,
If Parson lost his senses
And people came to theirs.
And he and they together
Knelt down with angry prayers
For tamed and shabby tigers
And dancing dogs and bears,
And wretched blind pit ponies,
And little hunted hares.

These pieces are not poetry in any high sense. They are more in the nature of disclo-

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asures of a widening consciousness on the part of poets, and open the way for the higher treatment of their themes when readers and potential poets have grown familiar with them. It is possible that their appearance means no more than a modern desire for themes that are not worn threadbare; the swing of the pendulum from the alleged poetry that runs—

Tally ho, tally ho!

And its oh! for the pace

Of the chase,

And the kill

On the hill...Tally ho!

All the same, we make the guess that these small poems are the outer expression of large interests to the poets, for, by a happy and significant coincidence, each of these two poets has found in his love of bird life a basis for symbolism of deeper verities; and that which has become a symbol has gone a long way nearer the permanent element in personal and universal life—even though the expression may go no further than Mr. De La Mare's grey melancholy in "The Cage," or Mr. Hodgson's simple fancy in "The Birdcatcher."

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THE CAGE

Why did you flutter in vain hope, poor bird,
Hard-pressed in your small cage of clay?
'Twas but a sweet false echo that you heard,
Caught only a feint of day.

Still is the night all dark, a homeless dark,
Burn yet the unanswering stars. And silence brings
The same sea's desolate surge—*sans* bound or mark—
Of all your wanderings.

Fret now no more ; be still. Those steadfast eyes,
Those folded hands, they cannot set you free :
Only with beauty wake wild memories—
Sorrow for where you are, for where you would be.

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When fighting time is on I go
With clap-net and decoy,
A-fowling after goldfinches
And other birds of joy.

I lurk among the thickets of
The Heart where they are bred,
And catch the twittering beauties as
They fly into my Head.

But though these may be long steps in the
direction of the Mystery, there are still longer

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steps to its heart, not in distance, but in courage and renunciation, for the Kingdom of Heaven still retains its ancient territory—within. "The angels keep their ancient stations," sings Francis Thompson, "Turn thou a stone—and start a wing." That is why the terms ancient and modern in poetry have no real reference to a calendar or a road-map. Their progress is not horizontal, but vertical; and in all the conventionally separate eras of literary history there have been the anachronisms, singers before their time, and singers behind their time. Mr. Masfield wants to sift through the body's cells to find the Master Cell, and from that point to glimpse the secret. He might as well peep into the oil-boxes and steam-chest of an engine to find the Engineer. The road of evolution however long is a blind alley unless it leads into the consciousness. The simple falling of a curtain may unveil the Ineffable Glory. Mr. Hodgson sings "The Mystery" thus;

He came and took me by the hand
Up to a red rose tree.
He kept his meaning to himself,
But gave a rose to me.

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I did not pray him to lay bare
The mystery to me.
Enough the rose was Heaven to smell,
And His own face to see.

It is just because the outer things are deemed "enough" that He keeps His meaning to Himself. It is this satisfaction and lack of a sense of spiritual exploration that has kept these poets from the Secret. Like Thompson in "The Hound of Heaven," they appear to have a dread that acceptance of the Divine means rejection of the human—but that is quite a mistake. The way to revelation, to the great satisfaction, is through unsatisfaction, through the recognition that the husks of life are not good enough nourishment for the Soul.

Thrice bless'ed they,
Loving all things, yet taking none to wife,
Who count abundant life
Good, yet not good enough
For those whose Being has its root
Past sound and sight,
Nourished on starry fruit
Plucked from the laden branches of the night.

But unsatisfaction does not mean dissatisfaction. One may enjoy the lesser for what it is

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worth, while striving towards the greater. We may

...love not less the things that are,
But more for what they lead us to.

We find the same spiritual timidity (the offspring of the Victorian negation) in a verse play by Mr. Lascelles Abercrombie called "Blind."

I've often thought, if I were tall enough
And reached my hand up, I should touch the soft
Spread feathers of the resting flight of him
Who covers us with night, so near he seems
Stooping and holding shadow over us,
Roofing the air with wings, It's plain to feel
Some large thing's near, and being good to us.

This is not to be taken absolutely as the poet's own thought, as it is quoted from a drama. The same poet comes nearer (in imagination if not in actual experience) to realisation than any of his contemporaries in the lines:

I was exalted above surety,
And out of time did fall,
As from a slander that did long distress,
A sudden justice vindicated me
From the customary wrong of Great and Small.

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I stood outside the burning rims of place,
Outside that corner, consciousness.
Then was I not in the midst of thee
Lord God ?

But he retreats at other times. He cannot live long in that rare ether.

How different it is with the modern Irish poets (if we may for the purpose of contrast anticipate our next study) who are native to the air of Heaven, and won the rebuke that they are on much too familiar terms with God. One of them, Joseph Campbell, in a recent book chants:

The ferns have set their croziers in our hands,
The clouds have crowned us with mitres of understanding.

That is the expression of the open Vision, the fearless affirmation; not the *feeling* that one *might* touch Him if one stretched far enough, but the confident adventurous stretch until the head is put in its divine proper place in the exalted mitre—the symbol of spiritual dignity, while the hands carry the crozier that is the symbol of the Divine Compassion among the highways and byways of human life.

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This spiritual achievement, the highest within the limits of the human consciousness and of its expression in literature, comes not wholly by prayer and fasting, but by grace and race. It cannot be found by searching, or circumvented by argument. The most that literary criticism which recognises it can do, is to state that there is something of conscious experience beyond what the poets of so-called realism dream; that life has deeper meanings than many think, because, (as Meredith sings of "Colour") "It's touch is infinite, and lends a yonder to all ends"...and to be thankful for indications in the new English poetry that the door to that deeper Life is almost ajar.

IV

POETS OF THE IRISH LITERARY REVIVAL

Coincident with the new movement in English poetry in England has been a movement in Ireland which took shape some twenty years ago, included a small group of singers, assumed a marked identity and importance, and then faded out as a movement, leaving its poets scattered round the world, westward to New York where one of them fraternises with the free-versers, and eastward to Japan where one of them uses a university platform for airing his ideas on poetry and poets!

But the coincidence between the schools of poetry in England and Ireland exists only in time. The English movement is the latest pulse in a general rhythm, the customary concentration of a new generation of poets as it reaches self-consciousness and makes the discovery that its predecessors are antiquated.

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It is a kind of recurrent trades-union for mutual protection against the philistine.

The Irish movement is quite different. It did not come together for mutual protection, for there are no philistines in Ireland worth mentioning. The Irish school was *thrown* together, not for protection, but for attack. Its future members awoke in different parts of the country to find themselves without a native language, without a native land, without a history.. They were driven to a threefold determination: to make a language for the spirit within them out of that nearest at hand (English), to build up a spiritual kingdom by means of the ancient Irish seduction of song, to make history by using the rediscovered literary heritage of their race the basis of their poetry.

This impersonal inspiration found its instruments in its own mysterious way, and without the discrimination and consistency that literary respectability would demand. Yeats and AE, the universally acknowledged dual heads of the movement (and it is perfectly fitting that an Irish movement should have two heads instead of one), arose out of the Protestantism that had been historically responsible for the scrapping

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of Irish culture; yet Yeats became the foster-father of the Irish fairies, and AE in his young manhood started a crusade for the restoration of the worship of the Pagan Gods—a movement that failed because it was not needed: the old Gods were still worshipped, though disguised in Latin ceremonial.

My own awakening came when I discovered that it was a Protestant's chief business to protest. A caricature of Irish life in the Crystal Palace in London, when I was twenty-three, roused my indignation, and sent me back to Ireland red-hot to abolish such caricature by giving the real life of my country literary expression. But first I had to discover and realise the life that I felt only dimly, for I was born into an environment in the capital of Ulster in which the first article of my creed was "Thou shalt love God, who is a strict Protestant, and hate all Catholics,"—and the bulk of the people were Catholics.

Out of the half dozen men and couple of women who made up what came to be recognised as "the movement" only two of the men were Catholics. The rest belonged (as I think the women too belonged) to the Protestant

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anti-Irish minority whose forefathers had come to the country as strangers and supplanters. Doubtless the enthusiasm of the group for their work arose out of the natural tendency for a convert to be the warmest exponent of the creed which he embraces.

But this is not all. The group stood for a revival of the devotion of the ancient bardic order in Ireland to craftsmanship in verse, as well as a revival of conscious relationship with the culture and genius of their race; but the passing of time will show that they stood far more for an attempted reincarnation of the Spirit of Poetry which had been hovering over English literature, and here and there touching it almost to consciousness—in Vaughan, Herbert, Blake, Shelley. At last the Muse found a group through which to lift poetry a stage higher in its vertical evolution, a stage nearer its proper work of singing (as Meredith has it) “our inmost in the sweetest way”—a group inheriting the skill of centuries in song; most important of all, inheriting a natural passion for the meanings of things, not taking on a creed as a soul-saving device, but expressing religion as a temperamental necessity.

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Tennyson struggled, with the aid of a noble sentimentality, against the religious doubt of his age; Browning wrangled with it; the new English poets look sideways at religion and musically sigh their doubt. The Irish poets never doubted.

The root difference between the two schools is seen in the following two poems. Mr. John Drinkwater, of the new English group sings:

I do not think that skies and meadows are
Moral, or that the fixture of a star
Comes of a quiet spirit, or that trees
Have wisdom in their windless silences.
Yet these are things invested in my mood
With constancy, and peace, and fortitude,
That in my troubled season I can cry
Upon the wide composure of the sky,
And envy fields, and wish that I might be
As little daunted as a star or tree.

This is the rational spirit that gets no deeper than its rationalism, and, when it takes up religion at all, makes it concrete, personal, dogmatic. But the Irish poet, Seumas O'Sullivan, not groping towards the Spirit from the hither side of phenomena, but looking at life from the side of the angels, can deny the obligation of

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Christian terminology, deny the finality of doubt, and put a Pagan divinity on the Cross of Christ.

I cannot pray, as Christians use to pray,
Before the holy Rood,
Nor on the sacred mysteries seven, as they,
Believing brood.

...Nor[†] can I say with those whom pride makes sure,
Our hearts emancipate
Have scorn of ancient symbols that endure
Outlasting late.

For I have seen Lord Angus in the trees,
And bowing heard
When Spring a lover whispered in their leaves
The living word.

...Yea, by the outstretched hands, the dimming
sight,
The piercé^d side,
Known when in every bough that shrinks from light
The Lord of life has died.

All Ireland is in those lines, the Ireland that has never doubted. For ages she has been called a superstitious country by those who do not know the difference between their own superstition, and the true superstition, that is,

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that which stands above belief (Latin *super* above, *stare* to stand), that is to say, intuitive spiritual realisation. For seven hundred years Ireland has been too busy to doubt. A century ago one of her poetesses sang that the people of Ireland were "Fighting like devils for conciliation, and hating each other for the love of God." It is that element of contradiction that bewilders outsiders. It is the fundamental Irish bull, the father of all the herd. If you understand it you understand everything, including Mr. Bernard Shaw, that living paradox—a pugnacious pacifist, a fierce devourer of vegetables, a hacker at religious notions with religious fervour, the most humble egotist who ever created great literature in the most common unliterary style.

Below these surface contradictions is the fact that the Irish race, speaking generally, is rooted in a consciousness of a larger life than that which is contacted by the five senses; not a "feeling after" that larger life, but a vital consciousness of it. Outer and inner are unified by some strange process.

This characteristic goes back into the dim past, and is seen in the philosophical literature

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of Ireland as well as in her poetry. It is the influence which permits a nation to wander into all sorts of contradictory extravagances of emotion and conduct, and yet preserve a sense of humour and identity. It allows one poet to sing of patriotism as Fanny Parnell sang of it thirty years ago, and as AE sang it half a dozen years ago, the one ready to renounce heavenly bliss for a sight of her country's restoration to nationhood; the other looking for no ultimate earthly kingdom, but for a city that hath foundation in a spiritual ideal. Yet in both of these attitudes there is something characteristically Irish, something which in the midst of diversity preserves a central imaginative unity and continuity. Let us contrast some stanzas from the poems mentioned. Fanny Parnell (1855-1883) sings in "After Death;"

Shall mine eyes behold thy glory O my country ?
Shall mine eyes behold thy glory ?
Or shall the darkness close around them ere the
sunblaze break at last upon thy story ?
...Shall the ear be deaf that only loved thy praises,
when all men their tribute bring thee ?
Shall the mouth be clay that sang thee in thy
squalor, when all poets' mouths shall sing thee ?

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...Ah ! the tramp of feet victorious ! I should hear
 them 'mid the shamrocks and the mosses,
And my heart should toss within the shroud and
 quiver as a captive dreamer tosses.
I should turn and rend the cere-cloths round me,
 giant sinews I should borrow—
Crying, ' O, my brothers, I have also loved her in
 her loneliness and sorrow.'
Let me join with you the jubilant procession : let
 me chant with you her story ;
Then contented I shall go back to the shamrocks,
 now mine eyes have seen her glory !'

Æ sings this song " On behalf of some Irishmen
not followers of Tradition :"

'They call us aliens, we are told,
Because our wayward visions stray
From that dim banner they unfold,
The dreams of wornout yesterday.

The sum of all the past is theirs,
The creeds, the deeds, the fame, the name,
Whose death-created glory flares
And dims the spark of living flame.

They weave the necromancer's spell,
And burst the graves where martyrs slept,
Their ancient story to retell,
Renewing tears the dead have wept.

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And they would have us join their dirge,
This worship of an extinct fire
In which they drift beyond the verge
Where races all outworn expire.

∴ We fling our answer back in scorn :
We are less children of this clime
Than of some nation yet unborn
Or empire in the womb of time.

We hold the Ireland in the heart
More than the land our eyes have seen,
And love the goal for which we start
More than the tale of what has been.

The generations as they rise
May live the life men lived before,
Still hold the thoughts once held as wise,
Go in and out by the same door.

We leave the easy peace it brings :
The few we are shall still unite
In fealty to unseen kings
Of unimaginable light.

We would no Irish sign efface,
But yet our lips would gladlier hail
The firstborn of the Coming Race
Than the last splendour of the Gael.

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No blazoned banner we unfold—
One charge alone we give to youth,
Against the sceptred myth to hold
The golden heresy of truth.

Such is, in a general way, the special quality of the Irish genius out of which the Irish Literary Revival arose. Let us sketch the historical background without which it is impossible to understand the modern movement... For many centuries the ancient civilization of Ireland was permeated with the spirit of poetry. Her kings were crowned by poets. Her laws were made and recorded by poets. Her tribal and royal histories were recorded and celebrated by poets. One of the qualifications for membership in the national army a thousand years ago was a knowledge of the twelve great books of poetry. An elaborate system of apprenticeship was evolved; and long before rhyme had found its place in European poetry, the Irish poets had worked out about two hundred special verse-forms, some of great complexity... Mythology, philosophy, religion, art, science, warfare, social life, nature, all were made subject of song. Let us hear one example which I have translated from the ancient Irish into

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English. In the history of English literature it is set down that Nature only came fully into her own with Wordsworth a hundred years ago. The following was sung by an Irish poet-monk from a thousand to twelve hundred years ago :

High on my hedge of bush and tree

A blackbird sings his song to me,

And far above my lined book

I hear the voice of wren and rook.

From the bush-top in garb of grey

The cuckoo calls the hours of day.

Right well do I—God send me good!—

Set down my thoughts within the wood.

A vast native literature thus grew up before the time when the Stuart dynasty in the seventeenth century abolished the ancient Irish polity, and began the cultural invasion that at the middle of the last century made English the language of the bulk of the people of Ireland. The old literature was all in the Irish language; and the qualities of vision, subject-matter and technique which were developed in the Irish language became the hereditary possession of the new writers in English...And it must also be stated that while our studies

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confine us to literature in the English language, there has been going on a literary movement in the Irish language—but detailed reference to it is beyond our purpose.

The movement called the Irish Literary Revival was therefore not a revival at all. There was nothing to revive. The new poetry gathered up into itself all the powers that had been let loose in English poetry through the French Revolution, the industrial era, the territorial expansion of the English language; gathered these up not because they were new and eligible for annexation, but because they were exterior reflections of the race-consciousness of Ireland. It did not need a French Revolution to force the "people" into the literary consciousness of Ireland: they had never been out of it. The sorrows of the poor did not need assertion, for of Ireland, as of no other country, save perhaps India, can it be so truly said, "The poor ye have with you always." The spirit of Ireland did not need any new thrill of colonial expansion, for the name of New Ireland had been given to land on the shores of North America centuries before Columbus was born. The spirit of the East

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found Ireland waiting as a sister, not as an inquisitive or new-fangled stranger, for the consciousness of the other world and the genius of devotion are native to Ireland...Some countries have made a business of religion; some have made a religion of business; Ireland has made a religion of religion. And this spirit is in her modern literary expression. People who did not understand, have thought that because AE sang kindly of the heathen Deities, he did not believe in the Christian God. The truth is that he believed more really and fully in the omnipresence of God than most Christians do, and so was able to see the One God under His various masks. People who did not understand, have thought that Synge and his characters in drama were irreligious because of their copious and elaborate blasphemy. The truth is, their blasphemy, when it is provoked, is in proportion to their belief in God. I have heard it said that there is no blasphemy in Japan because there is no God believed in sufficiently earnestly to be worth blaspheming.

But while the new movement was not a revival, it represented a different phase of what was once a united literary expression...During

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the first onslaught on the native literature by the Anglo-Norman culture, the folk-poets of Ireland continued to sing about Ireland, but under assumed names, since it was penal to sing of her by her own name. This habit has persisted, and gives a curious esoteric feeling to a good deal of modern Irish poetry, in which a woman is the ostensible subject of the song, but no mortal woman, rather a figure of the soul or the spirit of beauty...In the nineteenth century the political struggle in Ireland became Parliamentary, and was conducted in the English language. About the middle of the century an intellectual movement sprang up, and put poetry to political use in an immense outburst of ballads and songs in English. But the concentration of literary expression in protest, and the emotions engendered by agitation, clouded the ancient spiritual vision, and played havoc with the artistic side of poetry...A period of dulness followed, but great scholars like Samuel Ferguson were busy restoring the knowledge of the literary treasures of the country. and these, when put into English, became the inspiration of the new movement.

When Yeats began his poetical career he

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played about with eastern themes for a while, and then took his place as one of the poets that counted, by the publication in 1889 of "The Wanderings of Usheen," a retelling of an old Irish story with all the spiritual vision and artistic joy of the elder poets, and with something modern and individual added.

This we may take as the beginning of the new movement. A new voice in poetry was heard; but it was not only the voice of an individual; it was the voice of a race, and it came from a region deeper than the lips, deeper than feeling or thought.

Before many years had passed, Yeats was engaged in the work of building up an Irish drama, and much of his lyrical genius was concentrated in this direction; but he never succeeded in becoming a dramatist: his plays remain poems in dramatic form. On the surface they speak in characters, but underneath they are Yeats through and through—Yeats the visionary to whom the inner worlds are partly open, the artist to whom a flawed word is a crime, the ritualist who must rear a temple in the imagination and evolve an elaborate and splendid ceremonial for the proper expression of his

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dream of the hidden Beauty, yet recognising that it is only his dream, and that the absolute Beauty is beyond. His mission as an artist (for like every great artist he has a mission even when he denies it) is summed up in the following eight lines:

All things uncomely and broken, all things worn and old,

The cry of a child in the roadway, the creak of a lumbering cart,

The heavy step of the ploughman splashing the wintry mould,

Are wronging your image that blossoms, a rose in the deeps of my heart.

The wrong of unshapely things is a wrong too great to be told.

I hunger to build them anew, and sit on a green knoll apart,

With the earth and the sky and the water remade like a casket of gold

For my dream of your image that blossoms, a rose in the deeps of my heart.

Not being able to remake the earth and the sky and the waters as a suitable casket for his dream of the divine Beauty, Yeats did the next best thing; he remade out of his race heritage

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and his own gifts a form of expression through which we on the outside of his dream may behold the "white radiance of eternity" split up into the prismatic colours. Yeats' poetry stands as a great stained glass window though the figure of speech does not convey his music between us and the inner Light, and throws a wonderful richness of design and colour across our imaginations.

With AE it is different, He does not build up his music ; it sings itself to him :

All the morn a spirit gay
Breathes within my heart a rhyme.
'Tis but hide and seek we play
In and out the courts of time.

Fairy lover, when my feet
Through the tangled woodland go,
'Tis thy sunny fingers fleet
Fleck the fire dews to and fro.

...Some for beauty follow long
Flying traces ; some there be
Seek thee only for a song :
I to lose myself in thee.

This last verse is almost a criticism of Yeats, method and an explanation of AE's own. He

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does not care for the stained-glass method of poetry. Indeed he definitely sings its dispraise :

Oh be not led away,
Lured by the colour of the sun-rich day. .
The gay romance of song
Unto the Spirit's life doth not belong.

His poetry stands like a small frosted white window of little panes, like Japanese *shoji*, through which the white light of the spirit percolates sweetly. The outer things of AE's poetry are reduced to a minimum, but the reduction in expression has a complementary increase in significance. His little poems of eight lines are like the Aphorisms of Patanjali, one of which was sufficient food for thought for a student for one year. Their full understanding calls for either a natural spiritual affinity with the seer-poet, or the power of an intellectual renunciation enjoyed by very few people, the ability to let the poems take possession of the mind and yield up their utmost. The whole of subjective philosophy (which AE would deny as philosophy but live up to as a law of his life) is in this little great poem called *The Unknown God* :

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Far up the dim twilight fluttered
Moth-wings of vapour and flame,
The lights danced over the mountains,
Star after star they came.

The lights grew thicker unheeded,
For silent and still were we.
Our hearts were drunk with a beauty
Our eyes could never see.

AE sings of reincarnation not as a literary idea, or a theory, but as an experience, and for doing so has earned what his critics in his own country regard as a terrible punishment—the awful name of Buddhist!—which indicates the ignorance as to their own heritage of thought suffered by a people cut off from its ancient culture which included the idea of rebirth. Yeats, less full in giving poetical and intellectual expression to his belief, being more the literary artist than AE, puts the matter as a possibility :

What else He give or keep
God grant me—no not here,
For I am not so bold
To hope a thing so dear
Now I am growing old,

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But when if the tale's true
The Pestle of the moon
That pounds up all anew
Brings me to birth again—
To find what once I had,
And know what once I have known...

The symbolism is here that of the ceremonial occultist; AE's is that of the spiritual seer, when he sings;

Dream faces bloom around your face
Like flowers upon one stem ;
The heart of many a vanished race
Sighs as I look on them...
...Your tree of life put forth these flowers
In ages past away :
They had the love in other hours
I give to you today...

Yeats and AE have taken their places as poets whose work will remain until humanity has outlived its significance, and that will be a long time. The ordinary term "great" does not apply to them: they have not the large and muscular qualities that have hitherto been the measures of literary greatness. Their work is based on the permanent things in humanity, and no failure of age on the part of their mental

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or emotional instrument can cancel the record of their prime. Their vision is ahead of evolution. They are the true futurists.

The adventure of participating in a new literary movement, and particularly the thrill of the theatre, drew many people round these two poets, and both from original impulse and imitation, much poetical coin of a new stamp became current. There were other Irish singers in England and Ireland, but these had not the particular quality of the poets who soon came to be recognised as the "school." Some new austerity of craftsmanship, some new widening of imaginative scope, some impulse deeper and higher than ordinary sentimentality and cheap rhetoric and moralising, marked out the group; but its chief differentiation from the elder and contemporary poetry was that its eyes were forward even when looking through the imagery of the past; its singing was less *about* Ireland than with Ireland as centre and the farthest fixed star as circumference.

By and by AE made from the manuscripts of the young poets a small book of selections. This was the first official document, so to speak, of the movement. But it did not include a couple

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of singers who subsequently took their place in the school ; neither did it include myself, for I had arrived previously, and was already something of an old-stager with four books of poetry to my name. This did not mean that I was more prolific than the rest : it only meant that I was older. Yeats and AE were on the verge of their forties, I of my thirties, the rest in their twenties. Hence while the younger generation were keenly susceptible to the influence of the masters, though always retaining their personal distinctiveness, my work moved somewhere in the suburbs of the affection of the school, with a lack of the new cliché, and an assurance and determination to go its own way that became a son of Ulster, and particularly a son of Belfast which had agreed to be called "the northern Athens." But there was a quality in my poetry that kept it close to the group, despite its faithfulness to established English models; "a southern soul in its northern*body" as Dr. Douglas Hyde exclaimed of myself when he heard I had migrated to Dublin in my twentyfourth year. There was also something in my poetry that was looked on with suspicion, and was finally characterised by one

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of my Ulster comrades in an earlier literary revival, in Belfast, as "the cloven hoof of moral purpose which is obnoxious to all decorative art." I remain hopelessly obnoxious, and still refuse to regard the great art of creation and revelation as merely verbal house-painting. Let me dismiss myself with a quotation from the title-piece to what must stand as my first serious volume, "The Voice of One," published in 1900 :

I am the Voice of One who cries :

Lo, here I cannot stop or stay.

I am not good, I am not wise,

I only follow far away.

And, seeing not, I yearn for sight

To read the heart of praise or blame,

To catch the beam within the light,

And feel the fire behind the flame ;

Or, rapt from all the tyrant hours,

That write their names in tears and blood,

I long to pluck immortal flowers,

And bathe me in a cool clear flood ;

And know that thing for which I feel

With frustrate fingers blind and dead ;

And turn Truth's never-ceasing wheel

And from its distaff spin my thread.

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And so, with ever watching eyes,
I live my life from day to day.
I am the Voice of One who cries,
And crying wander on my way.

I did not know when I sang thus the desire of my young manhood that I was singing the genius of Ireland, and expressing the central characteristic of a yet unrecognised school of poets. Yet it was that spiritual tension, that straining after the significances of things, that was noted as the essential affinity between three books of poetry published simultaneously in 1912 by the house of Maunsel of Dublin, to which the young poets of the new movement owe more for their finding of a public than they can repay. The three books were, "Poems" by Seumas (James) O'Sullivan, "The Hill of Vision" by James Stephens, and my own "Etain the Beloved." Critics were not slow to point out the curious coincidence of the personal names of the three authors being James, a coincidence that appeared to symbolise their spiritual unity, while their distinctive qualities were equally symbolised in their family names, O'Sullivan calling up something of the tradition of classi-

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cal Ireland, Stephens representing its energy that had given its name to one of the revolutionary movements, and Cousins going back to French intrusions with their genius for craftsmanship and form.

The tension that I have indicated in my own work shows itself conspicuously in the work of James Stephens, whose first slim book of poetry was fittingly called "Insurrections." His second book, "The Hill of Vision," which came out along with the books of the other two Jameses has in "A Prelude and a Song" these lines :

If I had wings just like a bird
I would not say a single word,
I'd spread my wings and fly away
Beyond the reach of yesterday.

If I could swim just like a fish
I'd give my little tail a swish,
I'd swim ten days and nights, and then
I never would be found again.

Or if I were a comet bright
I'd drop in secret every night
Ten million miles, and no one would
Know where I kept my solitude.

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But I am not a bird or fish
Or comet, so I need not wish
And need not try to get away
Beyond the reach of yesterday.

Damn Yesterday ! and this and that,
And these and those, and all the flat
Dull catalogue of weighty things
That somehow fastened to my wings.

That is Stephens' protest against boundaries set by tradition, a demand for elbow room for the emotions and the things of the lower mind. My tension began as a tension of the spirit, and remains so. O'Sullivan's tension was that of the higher mind, claiming room for itself among the more energetic forces. Thus he sings in the preface to his "Poems":

Though late in a too travelled world,
From no far land our sails are furled
For harbour, yet, perchance, we bring
Tokens of farther wandering.:
For, it may be, our sadder hearts
Have dealt in more enchanted marts
Than those old singers, and our eyes
Have gathered costlier merchandise.
Witness if in our song there be,
For that fierce olden ecstasy,

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For that old singing wild and brave,
Magic of wood and wind and wave,
For old high thoughts that clashed like swords,
A wisdom winnowed from light words.

In these lines and elsewhere O'Sullivan discloses his faithfulness to the masters of the school. He is their truest disciple. He takes his food at their table, while others of the school took the food away with them in their pockets and ate it where and when they chose.

Of those others, the two remaining singers of the school who have continued their work as poets, Padric Colum and Joseph Campbell, take us away from the atmosphere of dream to that of reality. But with the Irish poets there is no antagonism between the two. Yeats the idealist dreamer and AE the spiritual seer, are close neighbours with the common life. They look toward life from the side of the angels. Colum and Campbell, the singers of an intimate life close to nature in the unsophisticated country, do not mistake that life for the whole. They too have their search. They look towards the angels from the side of daily life. Colum sketches a Plougher, one of his own kith and kin by physical heredity, yet he feels the

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difference in their intellectual capacity, and a still greater difference between the brute and the man. He lifts the poem from the broken soil to the heavens.

Sunset and silence ! A man : around him earth
savage, earth broken ;

Beside him two horses—a plough !

...Brute-tamer, plough-maker, earth-breaker !

Canst hear ? There are ages between us.

Is it praying you are as you stand there alone in
the sunset ?

What matter your foolish reply, O man standing
lone and bowed earthward.

Your task is a day near its close. Give thanks to
the night-giving God.

Slowly the darkness falls, the broken lands blend
with the savage ;

The brute-tamer stands by the brutes, a headbreadth
only above them.

A headbreadth ? Aye, but therein is hell's depth, and
the height up to heaven,

And the thrones of the gods and their halls, their
chariots, purples and splendours.

To Campbell, the larger consciousness comes more gently than to the others. He is more religious than the other poets of the school, but

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his religiousness is far removed from the strident dogmatism of the city that is his birthplace and mine. He has the Catholic and Celtic intimacy with the inner life that comes not of conflict but through contemplation.

When rooks fly homeward and shadows fall,
When roses fold on the hay-yard wall,
When blind moths flutter by door and tree,
Then comes the quiet of Christ to me.

...When stars look out on the Children's Path
And grey mists gather on carn and rath,
When night is one with the brooding sea,
Then comes the quiet of Christ to me.

So also sing the two women poets who have been identified with the movement and found their place in published books. Susan Mitchell thus declares her faith ;

Age cannot reach me where the veils of God have
shut me in,
For me thy myriad births of stars and suns do but
begin,
And here how fragrantly there blows to me the holy
breath,
Sweet from the flowers and stars and hearts of men,
from life and death :

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...Awhile we walk the world on its wide roads and
narrow ways,
And they pass by, the countless shadowy groups of
nights and days :
We know them not, O happy heart, for you and I
Watch where, within, a slow dawn lightens up
another sky.

So also Ella Young :

One night the beauty of the stars
Made magic for me white and still
I climbed the road above the hill
The road no waking footstep mars.

I met my Lady in the wood
The black pine wood above the road
Dream-fair her beauty white and still ;
I knelt as one before the Rood.

White dream that makes my life a war
Of wild desire and baffled will,
Once more my soul with beauty fill,
Rise through the darkness, O my star.

Our study does not permit us to go in detail into the matter of technique or the qualities of these poets. But that special characteristic of tension towards an expansion of consciousness is fundamental, not casual ; it is felt throughout

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the whole body of work produced by the school, and still being produced though with the variations that years bring. The tension is felt as an influence in the poetry of other groups. It will be still more felt in future, for it is of the future, an anticipation of the evolution of the human consciousness. . Hence while it sprang up in a particular time, it belongs by virtue of its prophetic power to times yet to come.

V.

THE INDO-ANGLIAN POETS

It is impossible to think of the Indian poets who are now writing in the English language without the patriarchal figure of Rabindranath Tagore setting itself in the foreground of the mind. From the point of view of technique he is only an English poet by courtesy of the freest possible interpretation of the term free-verse. He does not write in lines ; he writes in areas, and he indulges in repeated refrains that are not in line with the practice of free-verse. Moreover, Tagore does not *write* his poetry ; he sings his poetry ; music and poetry are born together in India. The writing comes afterwards as a means of record, not as an aid to creation. Moreover also, Tagore neither writes nor sings in English ; he is a Bengali poet pure and simple, the culmination of the literature of a people as numerous as those of Great Britain, and therefore as eminent in his own land as Shakespeare in his—and more so, for while Shakespeare is a literary figure on a pedestal, Tagore is, and will

remain among his people, a vital spiritual power. He is to them a saint, a *guru*, an object of worship; one of a long line of singing saints, men and women to whom realisation and wisdom and song were, and are, one. To find Tagore's ancestry you have to go back through Indian history, and hear such songs as that of Appar of the early seventh century in the southern Tamil country, of the Rajput Queen, Mirabai, in the sixteenth century, of Tukaram of the Maharashtra country in the seventeenth century; philosopher-poets to whom, as I have elsewhere written, their "philosophy was so much a thing of life, so exalted by the joy of discovery and experience, so vitalised by emotion, that it was the most natural thing in life for them to express in poetry the thoughts that to them were charged with feeling and the feelings that to them were made coherent by thought."*

On what principle, then, do we regard Tagore's work as part of modern English literature? On no principle, but simply because we cannot keep it out. It is as impossible to think back on the

* "The Renaissance in India"—Chapter "Literary Ideals,"

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history of English literature without Tagore as without Tennyson or Pope or Chaucer. He has become part and parcel of it, a classic in his lifetime; and just as we occasionally awake with a shock to the question as to how our forefathers managed to do without electricity, we sometimes start and wonder how English literature managed to get on without Tagore.

It is the miracle of genius in literature to make itself inevitable in its own time and place and language; but it is twice a miracle and more, to overleap the barriers of two languages that are totally different in character, and two attitudes to life that are as different as a cyclone and an anti-cyclone, the one drawing everything to itself and producing a condition of turmoil and egotism: the other giving everything away, and reaching the great calm of self surmounted.

Tagore sings:

Would you put your wreath of fresh flowers on my
neck, fair one ?

But you must know that the one wreath that I had
woven is for the many, for those who are seen in
glimpses, or dwell in lands unexplored, or live in
poets' songs.

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It is too late to ask my heart in return for yours.
There was a time when my life was like a bud, all its
perfume was stored in its core.
Now it is squandered far and wide.
Who knows the enchantment that can gather and
shut it up again?
My heart is not mine to give to one only,
It is given to the many.

That is one of the reasons why Tagore has become a world-poet, the singer of "heathen" songs printed in choice editions and issued as illuminated calendars to celebrate the birthday of the founder of Christianity! He has got down to fundamentals, to the great humanities; nay, rather, to the great divinities—to those conceptions of human origin and destiny that charge the heart with a great dignity, and give the thought wider horizons and an invitation up hillsides towards the stars. He does not look on life and the universe with an eye that sees only the masks of things. He sings:

There is a looker-on who sits behind my eyes.
It seems he has seen things in ages and worlds
beyond memory's shore, and those forgotten
sights glisten on the grass and shiver on the
leaves. He has seen under new veils the face of

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the one beloved, in twilight hours of many a nameless star. Therefore his sky seems to ache with the pain of countless meetings and partings, and a longing pervades this spring breeze—the longing that is full of the whisper of ages without beginning.

With this double vision (so close in affinity to that of the Celtic poets) there is no chink through which lamentation for the past can enter his song. No indeed; to Tagore time presents the mystic paradox of becoming younger as it goes on. Youth is not behind him. It is ahead of him, because the Eternal Youth is within him.

A message came from my youth of vanished days saying, "I wait for you among the quiverings of unborn May. Where smiles ripen for tears, and hours ache with songs unsung."

It says, "Come to me across the worn-out track of age, through the gates of death. For dreams fade, hopes fail, the gathered fruits of the year decay, but I am the eternal truth, and you shall meet me again and again in your voyage of life from shore to shore."

We see in these songs the other reason why Tagore has become a world-poet; in addition

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to his singing the song of humanity in the highest, in addition to his *message*, he squanders the gift of beauty in phrases and images that are of the essence of poetry. He has had the good fortune to have a perfectly equipped translator—that is, himself. True, his work has been touched up by others, but the total that all his improvers have affected is no more than straightening a hair of his head. The genius that carried him beyond the symbolism of a Hindu sect (his songs belong to the Vaishnavite worship) into the heart of humanity, carried him also across the idiosyncrasies of two languages, and enabled him, out of his education in English, to make of his songs not a translation but a new creation. Their imagery has the peculiar facination of the East for the western mind, and even in the hands of a bad translator they would have exercised their charm; but put into the wave-like prose-poetry of their creator, and indicating by the slightest emphasis something of the method of the original, they are perfect delights of music and fancy, apart from their deep significances. Take this song, for example, and mark the metrical and intellectual design that runs through it, making a

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beautiful garment for the soul in one of her experiences that cannot be put into scientific terminology :

Lest I should know you too easily, you play with
me.

You blind me with flashes of laughter to hide your
tears,

I know, I know your art ;

You never say the word you would.

Lest I should not prize you, you elude me in a
thousand ways.

Lest I should confuse you with the crowd, you stand
aside.

I know, I know your art ;

You never walk the path you would.

Your claim is more than that of others, that is why
you are silent.

With playful carelessness you avoid my gifts.

I know, I know your art ;

You never will take what you would.

I have taken none of the foregoing examples from "Gitanjali," for that book has taken its place alongside "The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam" as one of the inescapable things in literary culture. Its sense of freshness and

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revelation is eternal, because its inspiration is from the eternal rock of the Spirit ; it does not ooze through the shifting sands of sensualism, or mere emotion, or blind negation. Literature in general will slowly rise towards its nobility and simplicity. Literary criticism will ultimately realise that, like the Cosmic Mind, it holds everything in its grasp, discarding nothing that is worthy in human experience, but dignifying all with the fulness of vision and the true perspective that are the special gift of India to English literature.

The examples which I have quoted are from Tagore's second book published in England, "The Gardener," and from a volume recently published in America, "Lover's Gift and Crossing." In these volumes there is noticeable a strengthening of the English ; not an extension of the beauty of the first volume, for that is a permanent possession of the poet, but a quality of intensity that comes of an increasing mastery of the foreign tongue. This strengthening will be found still more marked in still later translations, of which the following are examples :

Must you come stealthily to gaze at me, Death, and
mutter words to me that are dark ?

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Must you like a thief creep unawares into my hours
to spread a nebulous numbness over them, to
tinkle your tiny bells of sleep in my lulled blood,
slowly to gather me into the coil of your cold
embrace?

Has it no ceremony of prodigal splendour—this
union with you? no uttering of ancient incanta-
tion? Put on your red wedding robe, bind up
your locks on your head in a gleaming heap of
gloom; let your black banner of triumph be
borne before you, and torches held high that
burn hissing holes into night's mantle.

Silence the petty claims of all my importunate
suits; send your resounding message of call
that thrills with fear the dumbness of the earth;
own me before all, hold me by my right hand,
raise me from the recurring discordance of daily
trifles, from the bed of sluggish dreams, from
the wakeful weariness of thoughts.

That is his song of death. Here is his song
of life:

Endlessly varied thou art in the exuberant world, O
Lady whose garment is the manifold; whose path
in the sky is strewn with throbbing lights; whose
flitting touch on the earth breaks into melody of
flowers; the sweep of whose trailing mantle rouses
a whirlwind of dance among the spheres, and whose

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many-voiced calls are answered from world to world in language of signs and scents and colours. Countless legends of thine are wrought in stones and images of gold, sung in songs and uttered in million voices.

Thou art One and Alone on the seashore of the soul,
O Lady of the silent solitude, one single vision
veiled with light, one lotus blossoming on the stem
of love, one moon in the bareness of midnight, in
the infinity of peace. There thou standest before thy
lonely worshipper with the gaze of thine eyes unfathomably dark, an image of the moveless lighting !

Aurobindo Ghose * presents an interesting contrast to Rabindranath Tagore. As a seer he is in the great tradition that for ages has made India the spiritual mother of the world. He is one of the never broken hierarchy of revealers. Like Tagore, he received part of his education in England, and he has made his mastery of the English language an instrument of the propagation throughout the world of the ancient

* These paragraphs are taken, with some revision, from the chapter on "The Philosopher as Poet" in "New Ways in English Literature."

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philosophy of the Vedas. To that work he brings a mind of extraordinary lucidity and grasp both of fundamentals and details, and a power of literary speech that lifts him (as far as his prose is concerned) to the level of the great stylists. His poetry is somewhat different. It is inspired by Indian realisation of the Great Life that upholds this ; it is given a shape and atmosphere like the Greece that is dimly incarnate in English poetry.

What strikes one most in the poetry of Aurobindo Ghose is the difference between its focal point of vision and that of all but a very small body of English poetry. Nothing is celebrated by him in song for its own sake. The poet's eyes perpetually go behind the thing visible, to the thing essential, so that symbol and significance are almost always in a state of interfusion.

For a companion to Ghose's double-sightedness, the glimpsing simultaneously of norm and form, we have to go to the little spiritual songs of AE. The Irish poet has not the patience and expansiveness of his Aryan brother ; but in heart and vision they are kindred. Ghose sings thus :

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All music is only the sound of his laughter,
All beauty the smile of his passionate bliss ;
Our lives are His heart-beats, our rapture the bridal
Of Radha and Krishna, our love is their kiss.

AE sings :

We liken love to this and that, our thought
The echo of some deeper being seems.
We kiss because God once for beauty sought
Within a world of dreams,

There is an intellectual quality in Ghose's poetry that does not quite succeed in being burned up in the fire of inspiration. His work is more static than Tagore's. Both share the privilege of spiritual realisation, but Tagore's way to expression is by the heart, which can only speak to the accompaniment of pulsating wings; and Ghose's way to expression is by the higher mind which is satisfied to move rhythmically among visual images. Ghose is first a philosopher; but his poetry is saved from being mere philosophical argumentation in verse by his good taste in image and phrase. There is a great solemnity and beauty in the following lines from "In the Moonlight :"

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If now must pause the bullock's jingling tune,
Here let it be beneath the dreaming trees
Supine and huge that hang upon the breeze,
Here in the wide eye of the silent moon.

How living a stillness reigns ! The night's hushed
rule

All things obey but three, the slow wind's sigh
Among the leaves, the cricket's ceaseless cry,
The frog's harsh discord in the ringing pool.

Yet they but seem the silence to increase
And dreadful wideness of the inhuman night,
The whole hushed world immeasurable might
Be watching round this single point of peace.

So boundless is the darkness, and so rife
With thoughts of infinite reach, that it creates
A dangerous sense of space, and abrogates
The wholesome littleness of human life.

When Ghose escapes into pure sight and
speech, he gives us a wholly delightful thing
like "Revelation," which stands self-existent
in its own authenticity and beauty :

Someone leaping from the rocks
Past me ran with wind-blown locks
Like a startled bright surmise
Visible to mortal eyes,—

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Just a cheek of frightened rose
That a sudden beauty glows,
Just a footstep like the wind
And a hurried glance behind,
And then nothing, – as a thought
Escapes the mind ere it is caught.
Someone of the heavenly rout
From behind the veil ran out.

When we turn to the poetry of Mrs Sarojini Naidu we are in a different world from those created by her two fellow-countrymen, a world flashing with pictures, thrilling with melodies, in which one gets into a tremendous hurry; yet through it all there is the subtle charm which India exerts. In single lines and in deliberate poems Mrs Naidu lets us look into the amazing groupings of colour and form, human and natural, that make the surface of life in India a fascinating kaleidoscope. But it is when she touches the great impersonalities and the deep and permanent elements of life that she rises to a fine power of phrase, a clear energy of thought, a luminosity and reserve that reach the level of mastery. Such qualities are seen in the verses addressed "To a Buddha seated on a Lotus :"

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Lord Buddha, on thy Lotus-throne,
With praying eyes and hands elate,
What mystic rapture dost thou own,
Immutable and ultimate?
What peace, unravished of our ken,
Annihilate from the world of men?

The wind of change forever blows
Across the tumult of our way.
To-morrow's unborn griefs depose
The sorrows of our yesterday,
Dream yields to dream, strife follows strife,
And Death unweaves the webs of Life,

For us the travail and the heat,
The broken secrets of our pride,
The strenuous lessons of defeat,
The flower deferred, the fruit denied ;
But not the peace, supremely won,
Lord Buddha, of thy Lotus-throne.

With futile hands we seek to gain
Our inaccessible desire,
Diviner summits to attain,
With faith that sinks and feet that tire ;
But nought shall conquer or control
The heavenward hunger of our soul.

The end, elusive and afar,
Still lures us with its beckoning flight,

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And all our mortal moments are
A session of the Infinite.
How shall we reach the great unknown
Nirvana of thy Lotus throne ?

There you have the spiritual tension of the poet; and there you have also the Indian poetess, singing ostensibly of the Lord Buddha but in the accent of the Vedantic philosophy, which indeed is as much the basis of Buddhism as of Hinduism. In another poem called "Leili" (Song) she carries us on lyrical wings almost to the heart of the secret of India, the mystical interpenetration of nature with religion, of religion with nature, and of life with both.

The serpents are asleep among the poppies,
The fireflies light the soundless panther's way
To tangled paths where shy gazelles are straying ;
And parrot-plumes outshine the dying day.
Oh soft ! the lotus buds upon the stream
Are stirring like sweet maidens when they dream.

A caste mark on the azure brows of heaven,
The golden moon burns, sacred, solemn, bright.
The winds are dancing in the forest temple,
And swooning at the holy feet of night.

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Hush ! In the twilight mystic voices sing,
And make the gods their incense-offering.

The union of nature and religious ceremonial in the identification of the winds as devotees in the forest temple worshipping the divine Night takes its place among the fine things in literature, with the same inevitability (yet how different in temperament) as Francis Thompson's union of sunrise with the ceremonial of the Catholic faith, *"Ode :"*

Lo ! in the sanctuaried East
Day, a dedicated priest,
In all his robes pontifical expressed...

and so on through detail after detail. But fine as Mrs Naidu's poem is in this respect, it is infinitely finer in its splendidly daring figure of the moon as "a caste mark on the azure brows of heaven." I well remember being asked in the province of Sind to contribute a literary item to an open-air entertainment at sunset. The sunset was at my back, and right opposite the full moon rose. Immediately Devi Sarojini's poem came into my mind and I spoke it with a realisation of its import such as I had not

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before experienced ; and I saw that in the lines the poetess had exalted India to the literary heavens alongside the throne of Diana of the classics. The orb of night stood as the sign and token of the Divine presence behind the phenomena of day and night, just as the caste spot on the forehead of the Hindu is a mark of the recognition of a deeper Life than that which eye sees or ear hears...And how splendidly the art of the poem serves its purport. The two words "golden Moon" are a perfectly simple statement of the burnished yellow of the moon in certain states of the atmosphere. Put it thus, "The moon is the colour of gold," and it is equally true, but the truth depends on an act of memory ; the moon herself is not present to the eye of the mind. But Mrs. Naidu's moon, through the very juxtaposition of the big vowels *oh* and *oo* stands out ardent and palpitant in the sky of the imagination, and makes the word "burn" (which is false in fact, as the moon only reflects) the one inevitable satisfying word.....It is said that Devi Sarojini in her youth had dreams of becoming an Indian Keats. In this particular item she has gone beyond her ideal ; for while Keats' "gibbous moon" *means*

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convexity, it has to reach the mind by way of the dictionary : it means, but does not create, the spherical orb that the Indian poetess swings on a phrase into the firmament of the imagination.

All through Mrs Naidu's poetry there is the note of suffering, a reflection of her own experience in a lifelong struggle against physical weakness; but this is only the cry of the lips, not the voice of despair. Life in literature, as in life itself, must be positive and joyful : negation and pessimism are rootless and without progeny. The thing of life is glimpsed in such a poem as "At Twilight, on the way to Golconda :"

Shall hope prevail where clamourous hate is rife,
Shall sweet love prosper or high dreams have place
Amid the tumult of reverberant strife
'Twixt ancient creeds, 'twixt race and ancient race,
That mars the grave glad purposes of life,
Leaving no refuge save thy succouring face?
...Quick with the sense of joy she hath foregone,
Returned my soul to beckoning joys that wait,
Laughter of children and the lyric dawn,
And love's delight, profound and passionate,
Winged dreams that blow their golden clarion,
And hope that conquers immemorial hate.

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the soul of humanity in its hunger and thirst
for articulation.

A thousand gold-bags of a Persian king
Are equal balanced with a grain of sand,

our poet of nineteen years sings sagely in a poem not in this book; and it may be that in the scales of art the weight of much predilection and a great many theories of human relationship will be found light in comparison with a grain of genius. We plan out our political systems, we expound our schemes of education, we talk of the vernacular as the safeguard of national spirit.....Then comes some individual bearing the sacred fire of genius, and its white flame makes our apparently shining "dome of many coloured glass" look like variations of the primal darkness. We are forced to recognise that our plans and arguments are only props to weakness, stimuli to derivativeness, signs of disease through which humanity is slowly progressing towards health. They are certainly not evidences of activity of the free spirit, which shows itself through individual genius rising above the level of a race or an age, and uttering itself in

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any tongue it pleases to use. It has done so in the case of Sarojini Naidu ; it is doing so in the case of her younger brother, the author of this book ; and literary history has now to record the fact that the wind of the spirit can blow with equal strength simultaneously from two points of the compass.

“ Harindranath Chattopadhyaya is, I am convinced, a true bearer of the Fire—not the hectic and transient blaze of youthfulness (which has its place and time, but only a place and time) but the incorruptible and inextinguishable flame of the immortal Youth which sustains the worlds visible and invisible...In that conviction I find refuge from inconsistency.”

The first poem sets the tune to the whole book—“ The Feast of Youth : ”

Lo ! over the mountains in the silver-grey
Enchanted distance, breaks a burning day !
Long clouds of faery-flaming fire
Bloom on the heaven-looming mountain-tops...
And everywhere warm silver fountain-drops
Scatter the music of desire.

The old stars dance enkindled with divine
Ecstatic sparks. The sea is foaming wine !

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The moon, a luscious ripened grape,
O'erfloods the Cup of Youth...The ocean shells
Transform themselves for rapture into bells
For youth's bright feet of faery-shape !

Thrilled by the scented breath of Youth, the wind
Snaps earth into a rich creative mind !
And threshes out the sleeping snow
Into an active dream of joy...The world,
A secret flower, its petals hath uncurled
Like visible hints of godly glow !

Here we come at once upon an unusual ardour expressed through a succession of images of great beauty. We are in the poetical tropics, not only personally in the warmth of the poet's feeling, but geographically in such a phrase as "bells for Youth's bright feet," which is not a youthful poet's fancy, but a glimpse of India.

All through the book, indeed, there is the fragrance and brightness and variety of India ; but the young poet is less objective and more definitely personal than his sister. He gives us in this book no songs that have India for subject, like Mrs Naidu's poems describing various phases of Indian life. He takes full opportunity of the prerogative of youth to busy itself with itself, and the result is delightful in achieve-

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ment and inspiring in prophecy. Nothing could be finer than the lyrical fervour of the poem called "Branches," with its simultaneous revelation of the aspiration of the poet and intermingling of the great triumvirate, God, Nature and Humanity :

The branches of my heart are now in flower,
For the bright Universal Spring hath woken
Within my being in her fullest power.
A vow she pledges through a shining shower.
I give her back a blossom for a token !

Through immemorial mists of faded dreams
A new thought twinkles like a golden glimmer.
My tears flow toward the End in opal streams,
My laughter bursts into a thousand gleams
And thrills the star-fires with a twofold shimmer !

The Spring-hues deepen into human Bliss !
The heart of God and man in scent are blended...
The sky meets earth in one transparent kiss...
My heart springs up out of the dim abyss
On wings of light god-rich and beauty-splendid !

That is the young Indian poet's response to the spring, somewhat different from the response in Tennyson's line, "In the spring a young man's

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fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love." The young man of the East feels also the subtle urge of the season, but he does not respond with one function only ; his whole nature responds, and in his response you have a glimpse of the essential difference between West and East both in life and the arts. One speaks from the point of view of our common humanity, the other speaks from the point of view of our common divinity. One is out to "enjoy life," the other to dedicate life to the enjoyment of it by the higher self. Chattopadhyaya sings: ("Ecstasy")

O make my burning blood Thy sparkling wine
For Thee to drink at pleasure and rejoice !
Transmute my flesh into a song divine
For Thee at will to voice !

Transform my tears into a silver shower
To mingle with thy rivers clear and white.
O ! make my laughter an enchanted flower
To blossom in Thy light.

Fashion a banner out of my desire,
And float it on Thy Palace, secret King !
Cleanse thou my life with rich relentless fire
Of endless suffering !

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O ! make each word I speak a crystal prayer,
Each thought I think a deathless Temple-flame...
Strike on the anvil of my heart's despair
The solace of Thy Name.

To the uninitiated western mind these poems are not unlikely to bring a sense of exaggeration on account of their perpetual sense of being off the ground, and their exuberant imagination. Indeed, some of Chattopadhyaya's poems appear to be nothing more than a string of figures of speech, as in this sonnet: ("The God of Warriors.")

I have a God...His arm is the white sky
Tattooed with starry beauty, and His proud
Determined brow the dark and threatening cloud.
His sword gleams in a lightning flash. His eye
Opes in the fiery sun...The winds that sigh,
His burning breath. The thunders bursting loud,
His mighty war-drum, Lo ! a gleaming crowd
Of colours in His rainbow-banner high !

He is a warrior beautiful and strong...
Through endless ages dauntless in the fight
He fights alone against the world's dark wrong,
Taking its people prisoners of right...
Across my dreams bursts His victorious song,
" Out of the darkness march into the light !"

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One might easily set that aside mistakenly as "a piece of oriental figure design." But anyone who has the privilege of knowing India knows that it is the young poet's enunciation of the philosophy of his race. Wordsworth put the same meaning into his immortal lines "above Tintern Abbey " when he spoke of a "motion and a spirit that impels all thinking things, all objects of all thoughts, and rolls through all things ;" but he did so as the termination of an adventure of the mind towards spiritual realisation. The young Indian poet begins where the old English poet leaves off. He has no need to argue himself towards an intellectual conception of the Divine immanence; it is in his blood and tissue. What comes new to him is its personal realisation, and his joy in giving it utterance. God as the lonely fighter, God as the Adversary of humanity (instead of the Devil as crude minds conceive the matter) is a fine literary figure, but it is also the essence of Hindu philosophy ; and the last line of the sonnet is only an English rendering of a prayer from the Upanishads.

Tagore has brought into English poetry the spirit of devotion, and after the manner of the

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Vaishnavite worship figures himself as the beloved sought by the Divine Lover. Chattopadhyaya too has a sense of the double life endlessly seeking mutual completion. He expresses this in a sonnet :

Love ! I have known you for one little hour
And claimed you mine forever... You have wrought
My life into a white continuous thought
Of you and left me breaking into flower,
Your fragrant breath was prophet to the shower
Within my heart. Beloved ! I have bought
Your love with painful silences, and caught
Your echo in my soul's resounding tower.
... Only our mortal lives are lived apart...
We are together through the lonely years
Invisible lip to lip and heart to heart...
You laugh my laughter, and I weep your tears.
We move to meet each other on our ways
O Love ! down burning nights and burning days.

And he gives it utterance which is at once more on the surface as regards its expression and deeper as regards significance, in " Messages : "

Secretly he sends His message
Swiftly through the flowering years ..
In a child's resplendent laughter
And a women's tender tears...
Sunset fires are dancing dancing

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To the music of His feet...
In the burning breast of sunrise
I can hear its footsteps beat...
...Lo ! His splendour bursts like lightning
Through the burning mystic space...
Shadows dance upon my pathways
To the light upon His face...
Silver stars are visible twinkles
Of His clear transparent touch...
He is moving every moment
To the world He loves so much !

Such poetry reconciles us to the phenomenon of an Indian throwing the genius of His race into English poetry, not as a habit for Indians to follow, but as an exceptional means developed by the Time Spirit for the letting loose in English poetry of a much needed element that will, it is to be hoped, warm its present chill blood, which has become so thin and cold that artificial attempts have to be made to keep it moving by the stimulus of mere sensuousness and physical excitement— attempts which have to be justified by exaggerating the importance of “humanity” in literature, and giving the term humanity an altogether inadequate interpretation.

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Literary history tells us, if we have only ears to hear, that negation and pessimism are blind alleys through which the Spirit of Poetry cannot pass. "If there was no God," said a scientist, "it would be necessary to create one." The human imagination needs a way out. Some little eddy of the great stream that comes from the hill-tops of inspiration may trouble the darkened pools, but it is only where the waters race with the urge of the heights and the call of the depths that we have the authentic music and joy of poetry. Shelley at the beginning of last century knew that joy. In the midst of his sorrows and disputations he did not mope moodily, though he sang of pain and disappointment. He knew that if winter comes, spring cannot be far behind. And this young Indian poet, with something of the Shelleyan stretch of imagination and lyrical rapture, shows the way at the beginning of this century out of the deep valleys of gloom and uncertainty into the sunlight and elevation of inner realisation of divinity. His book ends with a song called "Night:" the song itself ends with a salutation to to-morrow morning;

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God plays upon the heart-strings of the dark
To lull the cry of birds and flowers and streams.
His magic fingers weave each starry spark
Into my sapphire dreams.

Out of the depths of night a vision starts,
Haunting my anguish with a touch of flame...
Like a rich flower unfolds the Heart of Hearts
The petals of my name,

The stars are white because His thoughts are white,
And are, like them, in deeps of darkness born.
O God ; I seek the message of the night
And find the gold of morn !

VI

THE NEW AMERICAN POETRY

“ There is more of the great authentic classical tradition in the ‘ Spoon River Anthology ’ than in ‘ The Idylls of the King,’ ‘ Balaustin’s Adventure ’ and ‘ Sohrab and Rustum ’ combined.” This sentence from the preface to an anthology of “ The New Poetry ” (that is, the new American poetry which began in 1912) forms an excellent introduction to the psychology of the new movement in English poetry in the land of Emerson and Whitman. It is emphatic and precise. The following, entitled ‘ Perry Zoll,’ is from ‘ Spoon River Anthology :’

My thanks, friends of the Country Scientific Association,
tion,

For this modest boulder,

And its little tablet of bronze.

Twice I tried to join your honoured body,

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And was rejected,
And when my little brochure
On the intelligence of plants
Began to attract attention,
You almost voted me in.
After that I grew beyond the need of you
And your recognition,
Yet I do not reject your memorial stone,
Seeing that I should, in so doing,
Deprive you of honour to yourselves.

Miss Monroe, the writer of the preface to the anthology, undertakes to educate the public to an appreciation of the startling paradox that, in order to be in the great tradition of poetry you must get out of the tradition of poetry. She says :

“ The difference (between the new poetry and the old) goes deeper than details of form, strikes through them to fundamental integrities....The new poetry strives for a concrete and immediate realization of life ; it would discard the theory, the abstraction, the remoteness found in all classics not of the first order...It has set before itself an ideal of absolute simplicity and sincerity—an ideal which implies an individual unstereotyped diction ; and an individual un-

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stereotyped rhythm. It looks out more eagerly than in; it becomes objective...In presenting the concrete object or the concrete environment, whether these be beautiful or ugly, it seeks to give more precisely the emotion arising from them, and thus widens immeasurably the scope of the art...The poets of to-day follow the great tradition when they seek a vehicle suited to their own epoch and their own creative mood, and resolutely reject all others...Great poetry has always been written in the language of contemporary speech, and its theme, even when legendary, has always borne a direct relation with contemporary thought, contemporary imaginative and spiritual life. It is this direct relation which the more progressive poets are trying to restore. In this effort they discard not only archaic diction but also the shopworn subjects of past history or legend, which have been through the centuries a treasure trove for the second-rate...This effort at modern speech, simplicity of form and authentic vitality of theme is leading our poets to question the authority of the accepted laws of English verse, and to study other languages, ancient and modern, in the effort to find out what poetry

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really is...Perhaps the first of these disturbing influences from afar to be felt in modern English poetry was the Celtic renaissance, the wonderful revival of interest in old Irish song. ...This influence was most powerful because it came to us directly, not at secondhand, through the English work of two poets of genius, Synge and Yeats. These great men, fortified and inspired by the simplicity and clarity of primitive Celtic song, had little patience with the "over-apparelled" art of Tennyson...It is scarcely too much to say that 'the new poetry' ...began with these two great Irish masters... Compared with these Irishmen the best of their predecessors seem literary. This statement does not imply any measure of ultimate values, for it is still too early to attempt them. One may, for example, believe Synge to be the greatest poet-playwright in English since Shakespeare, and one of the great poets of the world; but a few more decades must pass before such ranking can have authority. The great Irish poets felt the French influence—it was part of the education which made them realise that English poetry had become narrow, rigid and insular... Synge wrote his plays in that wide borderland

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between prose and verse, in a form which, whatever one calls it, is essentially poetry, for it has passion, magic, rhythm, and glorious imaginative life...They (the modern *vers libertines* as they have been wittily called) are trying to make the modern manifestations of poetry less a matter of rules and formulae, and more a thing of the spirit, and of organic as against imposed rhythm...In the nineteenth century the western...aesthetic world discovered the orient...a few airs from Japan blew in—a few translations of *hokku* and other forms—which showed the stark simplicity and crystal clarity of the art among Japanese poets...Of late the Indian influence has been emphasised by..... Tagore.....The oriental influence is to be welcomed because it flows from deep original streams of poetic art...In much of the work of the imagists, and other radical groups, we find something of the oriental directness of vision and simplicity of diction, also now and then a hint of the unobtrusive oriental perfection of form and delicacy of feeling...All these influences...are by no means a defiance of the classical tradition. On the contrary they are an endeavour to return to it at its great original

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sources, and to sweep away artificial laws—the *obiter dicta* of secondary minds—which have encumbered it.”

Thus far Miss Monroe on the new poetry. The selection which she has made from her own poetry for the anthology is presumably illustrative of some one or more of her theories, though her first book is dated twenty years before the coming of the “new poetry.” Here are some lines.

Look at her—there she sits upon her throne
As ladylike and quiet as a nun !
But if you cross her—whew ! her thunderbolts
Will shake the earth ! She’s proud as any queen,
The beauty—knows her royal business too,
To light the world, and does it night by night
When her gay lord, the sun, gives up his job.
.....Sometimes I wonder why she stoops
To be my friend—oh yes, who talks to me
And sings away my loneliness ; my friend,
Though I am trivial and she sublime.
Hard-hearted ?—No, tender and pitiful,
As all the great are...
She talks to me, tells me her troubles too,
Just as I tell her mine...So there she sits,
Mounted on all the ages, at the peak
Of time. The first man dreamed of light, and dug

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The sodden ignorance away, and cursed
The darkness ; young primeval races dragged
Foundation stones, and piled into the void
Rage and desire ; the Greek mounted and sang
Promethean songs and lit a signal fire :
The Roman bent his iron will to forge .
Deep furnaces ; slow epochs rivetted
With hope the secret chambers till at last
We, you and I, this living age of ours,
A new-winged Mercury, out of the skies
Filch the wild spirit of light, and chain him there
To do her will forever...

And so on. If Wordsworth should happen to find these lines in his drawer and mistake them for his own because of his phrase "quiet as a nun," it would take some argument to convince him, I fear, that they were a specimen of new poetry, American or European. He might wrinkle his forehead over the word "whew," and the idea of a lord having such a vulgar thing as a "job" to give up ; but apart from these things, he would probably regard the lines as good orthodox blank verse about something or other. And in this he would be nearer truth than he was when he set the fashion of sophisticated poets aping common speech and dealing with common sub-

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jects, and deluding themselves with the idea that they were striving for "a concrete and immediate realisation of life"—a phrase which performs the operation of swallowing itself, since realisation is a function of the abstract mind and at the exact opposite end of the mental stick from the concrete.

If the new poetry has set before itself an ideal of "absolute simplicity and sincerity," that ideal remains an ideal as far as this poem is concerned; for as regards sincerity, it is written by a woman in the pose of a mechanical engineer; and as regards simplicity, all its rhetoric, its remote allusions to classical matters beloved of those whom Miss Monroe calls "the second-rate," and its quite ordinary diction and rhythm (those discarded characteristics of the bad old poetry) circle and swell round the subject of—no, not the moon, "though by your smiling you do seem to say so," but a turbine! ...We might guess from references to "terminals of yonder switch" and her "carbon packings" that something mechanical is meant; but an untutored mind might jump to the notion that since the subject of the poem is "sublime" and the author "trivial," these bits of mecha-

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nical knowledge were the latest method in poetry, subtle figures of speech delicately alluding to parts of the sublime creature's anatomy. Otherwise how could it be artistically possible for actual bits of machinery to rattle side by side with Miltonic metaphor and personification, especially since another of the new American poets, Mr. Ezra Pound, has settled once for all that Milton was a "pompous ass." ('The Little Review,' September 1918). You can hear the rattle in the lines:

...Look—if I but lay a wire
Across the terminals of yonder switch
She'll burst her windings, rip her castings off,
And shriek till envious Hell shoots up its flames,
Shattering her very throne...
...She will laugh at me
To show her power : maybe her carbon packings
Lack steam, and I run madly back and forth
To keep the infernal fiends from breaking loose :
Suddenly she will throttle them herself
And chuckle softly, far above me there,
At my alarm...

There is one possible ground on which such apparent mixtures of the actual and the metaphorical may be explained—that is, that, in

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the American school of poetry, artistic reason has been discarded as well as rhyme, and harmony of figure bundled away with the exploded superstition of beauty.

Miss Monroe has written a good deal of passable verse which has about as much relation, fortunately, to her theories as Wordsworth's verse had to his; and it is one of the amazements of literary history that so many supposedly intelligent people can survive the chapters on this subject in Coleridge's "Biographia Literaria." Miss Monroe is one sturdy survivor. Miss Amy Lowell is another, and our knowledge of the new American poetry would be incomplete without reference to her preface to her 1914 volume entitled "Men, Women and Ghosts." She says:

"It has long been a favourite idea of mine that the rhythms of *vers libre* have not been sufficiently plumbed" (nor, apparently, the possibilities of mixing metaphors like the *plumbing* of *rhythms*)..." I think it was the piano pieces of Debussy, with their strange likeness to short *vers libre* poems, which first showed me the close kinship of music and poetry, and there flashed into my mind the idea of using the

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movement of poetry in the same way that the musician uses the movement of music...It was quite evident that this could never be done in the strict pattern of a metrical form " (Debussy will be interested to know that his piano pieces are not related to strict pattern of metrical form) " but the flowing fluctuating rhythms of *vers libre* seemed to open the door to such an experiment. First, however, I considered the same method as applied to the more pronounced movements of natural objects. If the reader will turn to the poem, ' A Roxbury Garden,' he will find in the first two sections an attempt to give the circular movement of a hoop bowling along the ground, and the up and down elliptical curve of a flying shuttlecock." The reader duly turns to see how the Muse disports herself when metamorphosed into a shuttlecock, and how she feels when set to performing circus 'stunts' and making geometrical graphs.

Stella sings :

Hoop, hoop,

Roll along,

Faster bowl along,

Hoop.

Slow, to the turning,

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Now go !—Go !

Quick !

Here's the stick.

Rat-a-tap-tap it,

Pat it, flap it.

Fly like a bird or a yellow-backed bee,

See how soon you can reach that tree.

Here is a path that is perfectly straight.

Roll along, hoop, or we shall be late.

Minna sings :

Trip about, slip about, whip about

Hoop.

Wheel like a top at its quickest spin,

Then, dear hoop, we shall surely win.

First to the greenhouse and then to the wall

Circle and circle,

And let the wind push you,

Poke you,

Brush you,

And not let you fall.

Whirring you round like a wreath of mist,

Hoopety hoop,

Twist,

Twist.

“ And that's how the waters come down at
Lodore,” so to speak, or rather came down a
century ago, and laugh at the preposterous

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assumption of the great name of Poetry by this poor jugglery of words.

A further development of this "new poetry" method is the imitation of the flowing rhythm of music in a piece describing the playing of a violin. But Miss Lowell set herself, as she tells us, "a far harder task in trying to transcribe the movements of Stravinsky's 'Three Pieces Grotesques for String Quartet'." Here is one:

Thin-voiced nasal pipes
Drawing sound out and out
Until it is a screeching thread,
Sharp and cutting, sharp and cutting,
It hurts,
Whee-e-e !
Bump ! Bump ! Tong-ti-bump !
There are drums here,
Banging...

—And so on through a dance in which pigs and peasants mix together until,

In and out, with the dance,
Coarse stuffs and hot flesh weaving together,
Pigs' cries white and tenuous,
White and painful,
White and —

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Bump !

Tong !

Miss Lowell calls herself an innovator in these things, and gives us examples of her "polyphonic prose," regarding which she tells us that "the word 'prose' refers only to the typographical arrangement, for in no sense is this a prose form." We are left wondering whether it is another unplumbed department of the new American poetry, the calling of things by wrong names, such as calling poetry polyphonic prose, and calling hoops and shuttlecocks in prose, poetry; for poetry these experiments are not if there is anything (and there is) in Miss Monroe's list of qualities whereby she admits Synge among the poets—"passion, glamour, magic, rhythm, and glorious imaginative life."

We come within hailing distance of poetry when we turn from these specimens of verbal conjuring to the work of the other editor of the anthology to which we have been referring, Mrs. Alice Corbin Henderson. Listen to this called "Two Voices:"

There is a country full of wine
And liquor of the sun.

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Where sap is running all the year,
And spring is never done.
Where all is good as it is fair,
And love and will are one,
Old age may never come there,
But ever as to-day
The people talk as in a dream
And laugh slow time away.
...But would you stay as now you are,
Or as a year ago ?
Oh ! not as then, for then how small
The wisdom we did owe !
Or if forever as to-day,
How little we could know !
...Then welcome age, and fear not sorrow ;
To-day's no better than to-morrow,
Or yesterday that flies.
By the low light in your eyes,
By the love that in me lies,
I know we grow more lovely
Growing wise.

That does not require a preface to justify it. It is not great or high, but it has a wistfulness, a sweetness, a simple wisdom, and a music that justify themselves. Even when the authoress descends to the easy prolificacy of prose odds-and ends called free verse, she invests it with

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some semblance of poetry in a delicate feeling and thought.

We must return to Miss Monroe's preface. We are told that the new poetry "would discard the theory, the abstraction, the remoteness found in all classics not of the first order." This discarding is part of the striving for a "concrete and immediate realisation of life." It would be interesting to see what kind of life life would be if theory, abstraction and remoteness were taken out of it. It is just these things that constitute the vital essence of life; but even if they did not in general, it is surely as permissible for a poet to sing of his or her theories, of the bliss of abstraction, of what Tagore sings as "Oh, far-to-seek, Oh the clear call of thy flute," as it is for him to sing of any other experience of consciousness.

Miss Monroe has some interesting things to say about the Celtic revival, which she regards as the first influence tending to bring about the new poetry. She calls the movement "a wonderful revival of interest in old Irish song." This influence reached America "directly, not at secondhand, through the English work of Synge and Yeats," who were "fortified and inspired by

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the simplicity and clarity of primitive Celtic song." The influence of French poetry, we are also told, was part of Synge's and Yeats' education to the realisation of the narrowness, rigidity and insularity of English poetry. .

With regard to these statements, it is necessary to say that the modern Irish revival on its English side had very little to do with old Celtic song. True, the translations by Sir Samuel Ferguson of old Irish romances stirred the imagination of Yeats and others, but this was purely as to subject and atmosphere, and much of the atmosphere was given off by Yeats' own imagination. The simplicity and clarity of old Irish poetry is a fiction of Miss Monroe's brain, or somebody else's from whom she took it, for technically old Irish poetry is the most complicated ever known; it is, indeed the parent of rhyme and verse forms, and had a couple of hundred different kinds of verse which it took an apprenticeship of twenty years to master; and as to clarity, there are poems of so deliberate an obscurity that they evade the most profound scholarship. Yeats never learned the Irish language or the French language, and only touched them in English translation. Synge

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knew and cared nothing for classical Ireland. He brought his natural morbidity and the taint of the Latin Quarter into Ireland, and seized on the most despicable elements in Irish life and on an artificial stage speech that no Irish peasant ever uttered, and built up a drama that wrought the ruin of the modern Irish movement.

Miss Monroe dwells on the eastern influence on the new poetry, through Tagore, and through the Japanese *hokku* poems, and gives an impression that these are very simple, and that in searching after such poems the new poets are, as she puts it, endeavouring to return to the classical tradition at its great original sources. This is not very simple as a statement, for if one returns to the source of a tradition one is no longer in the tradition ; one cannot swim in a river by going to its spring. Be that as it may, if Tagore is one of the originals he is far from simple in verse structure. His Bengali is full of subtle harmonies and metrical excellencies. If Basho is one of the originals to which they want to return, his perfection of form cannot be called "unobtrusive" for the *hokku* is as rigid as steel ; neither are his poems marked by stark simplicity. The bald renderings of them into

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English give no idea of the purport they have for a Japanese mind which responds sensitively to suggestion after suggestion...All these half true and wholly false statements give a feeling of insecurity to Miss Monroe's preface in spite of its apparent certainty of utterance. •

Fortunately for the future of American poetry there is a large amount of work produced which refuses to be bound by the new tyranny of free verse, and, feeling towards spiritual freedom, moves along the sure path of evolution in form. We see this progression in such lines as the following by Witter Bynner :

Behold the man alive in me,
Behold the man in you !
If there is God—am I not He?
Shall I myself undo ?
...I have been waiting long enough...
Impossible Gods, goodbye !
I wait no more.....the way is rough—
But the God who climbs is I.

These lines show the clean workmanship and strong nervous turn of the wrist that are characteristic of much of the best English poetry of to-day. We find the same quality, less doctrinally, more emotionally uttered in his

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poem entitled "During a Chorale by Cesar Franck," in which (even as Browning long before Miss Lowell's discovery, brought out the heart and soul of music in his consummately splendid poems on music and musicians) Mr. Bynner weds the chaste nobility of love in death in his poem with the noble chastity of the music of the great French composer.

In an old chamber softly lit
We heard the Chorale played,
And where you sat, an exquisite
Image of Life and lover of it,
Death sang a serenade.

I know now, Celia, what you heard,
And why you turned and smiled.
It was the white wings of a bird
Offering flight, and you were stirred
Like an adventurous child.

Death sang : " Oh, lie upon your bier,
Uplift your countenance :"
Death bade me be your cavalier,
Called me to march and shed no tear,
But sing to you and dance.

And when you followed, lured and led
By those mysterious wings,
And when I heard that you were dead,

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I could not weep. I sang instead,
As a true lover sings.

...To-day a room is softly lit :
I hear the Chorale played.
And where you come, an exquisite
Image of Death and lover of it,
Life sings a serenade.

Silence, not words or the clapping of hands, is the true tribute to a work of art like that, with its approximation to musical form not only in the technical matter of the repetition (with a difference) of the first and last verses, but with the same change wrought in the human situation. This is where music and poetry truly meet—in the subtle interchange of spirit, not in that contortion of the arts that would make music and poetry imitate gross sound and motion, or marble masquerade as wood...In Mr. Bynner's poetry we meet, with a sense of hope and refreshment, that stretch of vision that is one of the signs of expanding consciousness, and an indication of the true path of poetical evolution. It is in such lines as these :

Grieve not for the invisible transported brow
On which like leaves the dark hair grew,
Nor for the lips of laughter that are now

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Laughing inaudibly in sun and dew,
Nor for those limbs that, fallen low
And seeming faint and slow,
Shall yet pursue
More ways of swiftness than the swallow dips
Among...and find more winds than ever blew
The straining sails of unimpeded ships !
Mourn not !—yield only happy tears
To deeper beauty than appears !

That poem is a symptom of the coming orientation of western thought on the great fundamentals of human experience and therefore of the arts. A more elaborate effort to give poetical expression to the latest findings with regard to death (or it may be for all I know the expression of an actual experience) is found in a poem by Mr. Charles Hanson Towne which he entitles "Beyond the Stars," of which the following are some lines:

Three days I heard them grieve when I lay dead,
(It was so strange to me that they should weep !)
Tall candles burned about me in the dark,
And a great crucifix was on my breast,
And a great silence filled the lonesome room.
I heard one whisper, " Lo ! the dawn is breaking,
And he has lost the wonder of the day."

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Another came whom I had loved on earth,
And kissed my brow and brushed my dampened
hair.

Softly she spoke : " Oh, that he should not see
The April that his spirit bathed in ! Birds
Are singing in the orchard, and the grass
That soon will cover him is growing green.
The daisies whiten on the emerald hills,
And the immortal magic that he loved
Wakens again—and he has fallen asleep."
...I heard them whisper in the quiet room.
I longed to open then my sealed eyes,
And tell them of the glory that was mine.
There was no darkness where my spirit flew,
There was no night beyond the teeming world.
Their April was like winter where I roamed ;
Their flowers were like stones where now I fared.
Earth's day ! it was as if I had not known
What sunlight meant.....I was the rain,
I was the dawn, I was the purple east,
I was the moonlight on enchanted nights,
(Yet time was lost to me) ; I was a flower
For one to pluck who loved me ; I was bliss,
And rapture, splendid moments of delight ;
And I was prayer, and solitude, and hope ;
And always, always, always I was love.....
...There was no shadow on my perfect peace,
No knowledge that was hidden from my heart.

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I learned what music meant ; I read the years ;
I found where rainbows hide, where tears begin;
I trod the precincts of things yet unborn.
Yea, while I found all wisdom (being dead),
They grieved for me...I should have grieved for
.. them !

We have touched on several occasions on the matter of the relationship of poetry to death. This is not due to any morbid satisfaction in talking of "graves and worms and epitaphs." It comes from an apprehension of the fact that it is a test-point in poetry. The whole of life, personal and national, is distorted and made miserable by the unintelligent attitude of western literature to death ; and until (through perhaps some over-emphasis for a while) western literature is set right on the matter of death, it will not express to its fulness the amazing richness which life discloses to those who understand it. Indeed one might claim with much justification that the greatest revolutionaries in the art of poetry to-day are not the poets who are fiddling while Rome does not burn for want of real heat, but the psychical researchers who are offering as a gift to poetry the poetical "idea" that Death is an arrant

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humbug—a case of poetical astigmatism ; and that the sooner we focus our vision somewhat deeper than the “bumpety bump” of a hoop or the ellipse of a shuttlecock, deeper than the dulling of the eye or the wrinkling of the skin, the sooner we shall enter individually* into possession of a larger life, and adjust our song to a wider gamut of feeling (mental feeling and spiritual feeling, not emotional feeling only) and thence to finer cadences and rhythms. This is the true way of progress in poetry—and with what begins to appear as a congenital perversity in so-called modern poetry, we find it stated in the preface to a volume of Imagist poetry that “in poetry a new cadence means a new idea,” when the truth of literary history and psychological science is the other way round—that a new idea produces a new cadence. ...Mere imitation of cadence is a sign of decadence, the building of a cinder cone in the hope that a volcano will take the hint and break forth. There is far more likelihood of true poetical advance in the acceptance of an old form than in conscious and aggressive pre-occupation with a new form ; for then the soul within has a chance of expressing itself, while

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the spreading of rhythms (that are less rhythms than pugilistic punctuations) to catch the shy feet of ideas is no more successful (as the new American poetry shows) than the spreading of nets in the sight of birds.

Take Mr. Ezra Pound for example. When he is very very modern and heroically free in verse and theme he gives us this called "The Garden :"

Like a skein of loose silk blown against a wall
She walks by the railing of a path in Kensington
Gardens,

And she is dying piece-meal of a sort of emotional
anaemia.

And round about there is a rabble
Of the filthy, sturdy, unkillable infants of the very
poor.

They shall inherit the earth.

In her is the end of breeding.

Her boredom is exquisite and excessive.

...She would like someone to speak to her,

And is almost afraid that I will commit that indis-
cretion.

That piece of free verse is not quite so emphatic as most of his work, after a dose of which one has a sensation of having been in



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some engine-room where everything was moving and creaking, with whistles blowing, demons stoking the fires, and a mad-drunk engineer rushing about cursing the men in twenty different languages. Such stuff is merely fantastic journalism, as indeed is almost all the newest new poetry. Bart Kennedy did it long ago—but he had a sense of humour, likewise of seriousness, and he did not call it either verse or poetry. But when Mr. Pound becomes himself—not that grotesque shade that is evoked when people allow themselves to become the victims, instead of the masters, of schools and movements—he can show something of what the future poetry will achieve in virile thought, athletic feeling, and clear musical expression. Listen to his “Ballad for Gloom” and recall the similarity of its idea to that of Harindranath Chattopadhyaya in his sonnet “The God of Warriors :”

For God, our God, is a gallant foe
That playeth behind the veil.

I have loved my God as a child at heart
That seeketh deep bosoms for rest,
I have loved my God as maid to man—
But lo, this thing is best :

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To love your God as a gallant foe
that plays behind the veil,
To meet your God as the night winds meet
beyond Arcturus' pale,
I have played with God for a woman,
I have staked with my God for truth,
I have lost to my God as a man, clear-eyed—
His dice be not of ruth.
For I am made as a naked blade,
But hear ye this thing in sooth:
Who loseth to God as man to man
Shall win at the turn of the game.
I have drawn my blade where the lightnings meet,
But the ending is the same:
Who loseth to God as the sword blades lose
Shall win at the end of the game.
For God, our God, is a gallant foe
that playeth behind the veil,
Whom God deigns not to overthrow
hath need of triple mail.

Here Mr. Pound touches the deep and permanent things of life and death, and—ceases to be a modern poet in the twisted modern sense: he becomes as old as Hindu philosophy in the subject of the verse, and as old as the English balladists (with some variation) in the form of the verse.

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We catch a glimpse of the working of extended consciousness into life in a short poem entitled "Souls" by Fannie Stearns Davis:

My soul goes clad in gorgeous things,
Scarlet and gold and blue.

And at her shoulder sudden wings
Like long flames flicker through.

And she is swallow-fleet and free
From mortal bonds and bars.
She laughs because eternity
Blossoms for her with stars!

O folk who scorn my stiff gray gown,
My dull and foolish face,
Can ye not see my soul flash down
A singing flame through space?

And folk, whose earth-stained looks I hate,
Why may I not divine
Your souls, that must be passionate,
Shining and swift, as mine?

Why not, indeed? Because literature, and particularly poetry, has assented to the foolish Victorian superstition that life and philosophy and poetry are in watertight compartments, that the soul is properly catalogued under the heading philosophy, and that it would be in its wrong place in poetry. But there are poets

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coming who will be blessed with that greatest of all poetical gifts, the gift of silence, who will not crane their necks looking for hoops and shuttle-cocks on which to try metrical experiments, but who will sing (not shout, or stamp, or babble) with the accent of Whitman and Francis Thompson and Shelley and others whose poetry has been, not the sputtering of patent matches, but the crackling of tremendous fires within.

There are hundreds of published American poets to-day, a band of experimenters, we are told, towards poetical freedom. They are engaged in "the effort to find out what poetry really is" (Preface, *The New Poetry*)—and we hope they will keep on trying. The number of poets and the mass of their work is a testimony to their distance from their goal. The "extraordinary revival of public interest in the art" is not necessarily a matter for pride. The familiar commonplace and the unfamiliar peculiar may challenge one another for first place in the public affection. Between these two stools the true poet may reckon on reaching mother earth. Mrs. Wilcox may sell by the ten thousand: Francis Thompson sold less than

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half a dozen copies of his second book though his first had set him with the immortals. The greatest of all find their place for reasons beyond reason—but a Tagore does not come to earth every week. Wide is the gate and broad the way that leadeth to the facile destruction of an artificial freedom; but strait is the gate and narrow the way of discipline and aspiration and sanctification that lead to poetical immortality, and few there be that find it.

VII

THE FUTURE OF ENGLISH POETRY

There is, somewhere behind the veil of the senses, a region in which the arts are one. We glimpse that region in rare moments of insight: it is acknowledged in the interchange of terms between the arts, such as references to "tone" in painting, "colour" in music, and "form," in literature. But the arts, in action, have not only the wide differences of their instruments (you do not paint with a violin or play tunes with a pencil); they have their wide differences of appeal to one or other or more of the four main qualities that we observe in ourselves and nature—the quality of appearance which is the field of painting, of form which is the field of architecture and sculpture, of feeling which is the field of music, of cognition which is the field of literature.

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We need not here do more than pause to acknowledge the fact that these divisions do not mean water-tight compartments in the arts. There are overlappings and exchanges, and a gradation between the arts as subtle as between midday and midnight. It is enough for our understanding of the place of literature in life, and for the understanding to some extent of poetry and its probable future, that we emphasise the one point, that all the arts are traceable back to experience in consciousness. When we say that sculpture has to do with the quality of form, we do not mean that it has only to do with a separate and distinct thing that can be dissociated from a work of art and laid on a table, a thing that exists outside our awareness of it. What we truly mean is that sculpture has to do with a special quality identified by our minds, a quality which we abstract from objects by a mental process. We cannot actually see the whole of a statue in one look. We see one part; the rest is in our mind. In music, which appeals to feeling, there is a linking up of sound and rhythm by an act that is above the feeling, an act of consciousness and memory. We *know* that we feel, otherwise we

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would not feel; and *knowing*, which is the ratification of feeling, is an act of consciousness.

The bearing of these psychological truths on our subject is that literature (which is the special mode of expression of our mental nature, and the nearest therefore to the act of consciousness that lies behind all other acts) influences all the other arts, and gathers into itself something of the quality of each. There is a need of conscious activity in the arts, and such conscious activity is never perfectly completely expressed without the aid of literature. That is why our first act on approaching a concert room or an art gallery is to procure a programme or catalogue. The painter does not merely transfer the thing seen to paper or canvas. His choice of subject, his selection of the elements in a landscape which he will use in his composition, are processes of consciousness. He acts as a being who reaches out from his mental world to the world of physical detail; and having moulded detail to his will, he projects again into the physical world a new artistic entity whose value is not in its reproduction of the thing seen, but in its usefulness as a means to interpretation and

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revelation. It is the recognition of this process that makes us talk of synthesis as the characteristic of the arts. The artist knows (intuitively if not intellectually) that the act of artistic creation, which is the reflection of the divine creative urge in the universe, is not creation in the sense of making something out of nothing, but an act of limitation, the exclusion of essentials, and the production of an entity of less numerical value but greater spiritual value, the creation of a focus sufficiently clear of dust to enable us to some extent to contemplate the vision of the invisible.

If we understand these things, we can understand why it is that the artist is so much more intense in the particular organ of his art than other people. The painter's eye is so active that the panorama of life has to him an appeal that it has not to people of less keen eyesight. And this intensity in the particular organ of his art affects the whole of his being. The artist is, so to speak, an electric battery. Surrounding him there is the great ocean of electricity, the creative thrill of the cosmos; but it will depend on the limitations which he imposes upon himself whether his power remains unexpressed, or

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flashes in light or throbs in heat. To demand freedom from limitation would be no more sensible than the demand of a stream to be set free from the tyranny of its banks, and yet to remain a stream. The call for freedom in subject and freedom in method in art is the voice of the Destroying Angel, not of the Creator.

Yeats had these truths in mind when he wrote in his poem "In memory of Robert Gregory: "

We dreamed that a great painter had been born
To cold Clare rock and Galway rock and thorn,
To that stern colour and that delicate line
That are our secret discipline

Wherein the gazing heart doubles her might.

The limitation of the wire causes the electric glow; the imposition of rhythm and rhyme does not chain the real artist. It stimulates to greater vigour; and many of the most beautiful things in poetry have come out of mental exploration through words and their associated ideas for a rhyme. Ruskin had the value of limitation in art in mind when he wrote ("Of the Pathetic Fallacy"), "A poet is great, first in proportion to the strength of his passion, and then, that strength being granted, in proportion to his government of it..."

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To the extent that we keep these truths in mind we shall be able to judge of the claims now being put forward in the name of modernity that poetry should give itself up to the reproduction of the pageant of life in the colours and accents of life; and of the quaint boast of poets who call themselves Imagists that they are out against the cosmic poet, who, they assert, shirks his art. (Preface to *Some Imagist Poets*). The cosmic poet is not likely to quail, if he has the cosmos on his side; and as to the charge of shirking, he may well smile at the curious notion that it is the reverse of shirking to pick up the superficial elements in things seen and heard and felt, and to renounce humanity's true world, the abstract world of spiritual ideas, for the phenomenal world, which is the rubbish heap for the leavings of inner processes. It is the intuitions that come from the cosmic hinterland of life, and the formulation of these for interchange and the joy of realisation through mental images, which constitute the true Imagism.

What then about the future of poetry on its technical side? Poetry is the vertical aspect of speech, whose horizontal aspect is prose.

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There is prosy-poetry, and there is poetical prose ; but poetical poetry is the language of exaltation, the outer expression of an exalted experience in consciousness which evokes an exalted feeling, and expresses itself in images which, in some mysterious manner, reflect both these phases of inner exaltation and also the characteristics of the event or object in the outer world which may have been the provocative cause of the expression, or its illustration. The expression may be (according to the particular case) in the strictest verse form, with a highly elaborated structure both of rhythm and rhyme. Rhythm there must be, for it is of the nature of exaltation to pulsate. Rhyme there may be, for there is a desire for music in exaltation, and in poetry it takes the form of rhyme, as in the outer life it takes the form of chiming bells.

But, to return to Ruskin's statement with regard to the poet's control of feeling, there is "a point beyond which it would be inhuman and monstrous if he pushed this government, and, therefore, a point at which all the feverish and wild fancy becomes just and true...The thought of the presence of Deity cannot be borne without this great astonishment. 'The mountains and

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the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands'." It was this great astonishment at the thought of the presence of Deity that justified Whitman's extension (not disruption) of artistic limitation. It is its absence that makes the vast bulk of so-called free verse today seem as "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal"—the effort of a gnatlike inspiration to mimic the voice of the ocean and the thunder.

Change there will be in the method of poetry, but whether this is in any real sense an advance is another question. The nineteenth century suffered from nausea at the mention of the heroic couplet, but that was not the heroic couplet's fault; it was the fault of Pope and his imitators who worked it to death. Swinburne stands for revolt in his extraordinary variety and complexity of forms of verse. But the Swinburnian oversweetness long ago began to cloy. Later there came a double revolt, on one side towards simplicity in verse, on another side towards "free verse." None of these things can be final. Nature abhors what Shakespeare (Sonnet LXVI) calls an "art made tongue-tied by authority."

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The final authority in poetry is—*poetry*; and what that is, every man and woman of cultured taste knows, and none can put into a phrase. It is not merely the thing said or how it is said. Over-emphasis of these matters leads not to poetry but to controversy. Yeats, writing of his first meeting with Synge in Paris, says, "He had nothing to show but one or two poems and impressionist essays, full of that kind of morbidity that has its root in too much brooding over methods of expression and ways of looking upon life, which come, not out of life but out of literature, images reflected from mirror to mirror." It is not the supreme business of poetry to act as commentator on life. Far higher is its business, of singing through life and above life, and of calling life up and away from the triviality and superficiality falsely called life. Highest of all is poetry's business of revealing through the fitting things of this life the Great Life that is for ever seeking to be "unfolded into light" through the arts. That urge may shine through the simple verses of AE or scintillate through the elaborate magnificence of Francis Thompson's poetry. To call the method of a poet either up-to-date or out-of-date

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according to its form in print is to apply a false measure to his work ; to set too much store by the eye-test. We should be far nearer the secret of poetry if the ear had a larger share in our judgments of verse. Once upon a time, before printing called away the attention of the world from the ear to the eye, sound was poetry's main characteristic. The sonnet, that people now measure by a tape and examine for its rhyme-scheme by an abacus, took birth as servant to a lady's ear. Its very meaning is a song. Yet the sonnet to-day is the furthest removed from pure lyricism of all verse-forms, so strongly has the tyranny of the eye been imposed upon us.

But the ear-test alone, while it would take us somewhat nearer the secret of poetry than the eye-test, would not take us the whole way. There is a curious relationship between speech (which is the medium for the ear-test) and emotion. If two people who have a quarrel are asked to write down a clear statement pro and con, they will remain comparatively cool ; but bring them face to face to "talk it over," and heat will be engendered on both sides, and, with the heat, a marked rise in eloquence and in

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rhythmic speech. We find the same phenomenon at the end of propagandist speeches, when the apostle of some idea has "warmed up" to his work. "How poetical!" the audience may remark. But a poetical thing need not necessarily be poetry. The ear-test alone may deceive us. Something more is needed. In addition to heat we need light—the light of consciousness which not only throws its illumination, but also casts the shadows which are as necessary in the arts as the lights. It is this light, this play of consciousness, that acts as the omniscient eye of control. It radiates from what is true to the artistic purpose; it shows up what is false; it is the alpha and the omega that makes a "perfect round" of a work of art.

According to the proportion of the light of consciousness in a poet's work will its contemporary rank be; and according to the reach forward of its ray into the future will be its longevity as vital poetry. The life of poetry is not measured by the strength of its lungs. The walls of the future will not go down before our trumpets. Neither is the life of poetry judged by the particularity of its eyesight: rather is the eye blocked by detail against the percep-

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tion of distance. Neither is the life of poetry to be prophesied from the oscillations of emotion. A pendulum may brag of the distance it covers in its swing, but it does not wander far from its chain of time. It is *vision* that lifts poetry out of the transiency of emotion and the fluctuations in habit of eye and ear, and sets poetry as near immortality as mortal utterance can go. Shelley, who was practically unknown at his death, is becoming more and more a power to-day, and his influence will increase and last to the extreme limit of his vision, and until that limit has been passed by the evolving consciousness of humanity.

Ruskin indicates this relationship of eye and ear and their inner counterparts in his division of poets into four classes ("Of the Pathetic Fallacy"),—"The men who feel nothing, and therefore see truly ; the men who feel strongly, think weakly, and see untruly (second order of poets), the men who feel strongly, think strongly, and see truly (first order of poets) ; and the men who, strong as human creatures can be, are yet submitted to influences stronger than they, and see in a sort untruly, because what they see is inconceivably above them. This last is the

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usual condition of prophetic utterance." The matter is not quite so easily quartered as Mr. Ruskin supposed, and we need not accept as final his inference that feeling is fatal to true sight. The point for our purpose is that Ruskin is here thinking only of those who can be seriously regarded as poets, not mere triflers in verse; and from Ruskin's division we can make a fair generalisation as to the technical aspects of poetry that will be favoured by each.

The poetry of eyesight will use verse of extreme and simple formality; the poet of strong feeling and weak thought will adopt an easy and elaborate lyricism; the great poet of strong feeling, strong thought and true sight will express himself in verse of great variety and and pliability; the prophet-poet will strain language and rhythm and form and idea to a point not far from the bounding line beyond which utterance ceases to be art. Whitman stands at that point, the great exception, not the presenter of free verse to the world as a new everyday mode in poetry. Free verse is for free souls—and the soul is not yet free in English poetry...And between the first order of

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poets and the prophets there will come the poets of realisation. Their heralds are with us already in AE and Tagore. Blake is of them; and the three of them stand for the future evolution of poetry from (but not excluding) the world of material things, into Blake's world of angels, AE's world of divinities, and Tagore's world of the One Spirit. Neither of them is perfect in his grade, because the earth does not yet provide perfectly the elements for the making of a perfect human instrument; but they are inspiring indicators of the Way, and those who would in poetry follow that Way must learn that the entrance to poetry is not through the word but through the spirit. What the spirit may do with its instruments who shall say? There may come a time glimpsed by Yeats, when.

...may be

In Truth's consuming ecstasy

No room for love or hope at all,

For God goes by with white footfall "...

a time glimpsed by Francis Thompson when the vision will be common, and its utterance needless,

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...Yea, the vision of Tabor mount,
Which none to other shall recount,
Because in all men's hearts shall be
The vision and the prophecy...

a time when the longest poem will be three syllables, the first speaking the Divine Totality, the last speaking the equally Divine fragment of consciousness, the middle syllable speaking mutual recognition—*Om tat Sat* as it is in Sanskrit ; the Whole looking to its smallest part and singing "I am That," the part looking towards the Whole and singing "That am I."

But between the twentieth century in English poetry and this consummation there is a long road to travel, and there are many by-paths for minstrels to lose themselves in. The Great Impersonality may be the highest achievement of art, but to-day we are bounded by our personality as human units, by the personality of our race and country, and by the personality of our age. Is it possible that these three limitations on the spirit are also three stages towards freedom ? Let us consider this question.

The motive power of expression in literature is not simple and uniform. It varies with different people. It varies even in a single

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person. . With one, expression in literature is a reaction to some stimulus from the outside world. The Spirit of Tragedy speaks through a moving event and says "Write," and Browning writes "The Ring and the Book ;" the Goddess of Beauty unveils her face for a passing glimpse in some thrilling scene and says "Sing," and Wordsworth sings his song of the daffodils. With another, expression in literature comes up from hidden and unfathomable depths, like a volcanic mountain in the sea which is both the channel of relief and final expression of great internal forces. These are the two main types of poetical expression, the original and the induced, the creative and the interpretative.

Whether the motive power of literary expression be within or without, the final word in poetry will bear the triple stamp of the personality through which it comes, the influence of race and environment, the light or the half-light of an age. These are among the necessary limitations that lead from "impression" to "expression ;" they are the banks that turn water in general to a river in particular ; the wire of expression (to repeat a useful figure) whose resistance changes the diffuse and potential

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electricity of inspiration into the movement of speech, the warmth of emotion, the light of thought.

The personal element in literature is the most obvious to the reader, and the most inescapable by the writer. He may merge himself by the Protean power of the imagination in the genius of another race as did the Englishman who wrote the "Letters of John Chinaman;" he may ignore nature as the English poets did from the end of the Elizabethan era until the era of transition that began with Cowper; he may see light in an age of twilight like Dante, or grope in the gloom of materialistic ignorance, like some present day English poets, when the light of knowledge as to the real spiritual nature of humanity is stretching its fingers towards the zenith—but he cannot escape from himself. If he is by nature healthy and robust, he will meet life, with Browning, as

One who ever marched breast forward ;
Never doubted clouds would break...
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.

If there is disease in his body or mind, it will show its symptoms in his prose or poetry. His

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literary epitaph will write itself between the lines in a cipher, as some say the monument of Francis Bacon is secretly built in the works of Shakespeare.

It is this latter fact (the transmission of what Meredith calls the "taint of personality," the hereditary transmission of qualities from the writer to his literary children) that gives rise to the immense variety of literature in the English language. It is the element of personality in English literature that gives it its scintillating charm—and gives it also its danger, as we shall see.

In this age of human evolution, when the truly spiritual poet, such as AE in Ireland and Tagore in India, is as "the voice of one crying in the wilderness," when the intellect in poetry is suspect, when a sentimental emotion is regarded as expressing the whole range of feeling (as if there was no such thing as the ecstasy of the soul and the joy of the mind) it is the poet who is able to throw his personality most fully into his poetry who will make the most profound impress on the literature of his age. Mr. G. K. Chesterton is a man of striking personality, but he is not able to transfer his

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personality to his poetry, which bears none of the distinction of his prose. Byron, on the contrary, threw his personality with such vehemence and fulness into his poetry that he held up the evolution of English literature for nearly a century. He confirmed the tyranny of personal emotion, and laid upon the mind of continental Europe the illusion that he, was a great poet. Had Byron, with his immense dynamic force, been a thinker or a spiritual seer, the literary instrument that the Eternal Muse is fashioning for the perfect utterance of her message would have been much nearer perfection now. If the literary autocrat is good, if his personality is thrown sympathetically into the interests of his subjects (that is, if humanity and nature are his theme), all will be well. But if his personality as a poet is thrown into his personality as a human being (that is, if his interests are centred in his own passions and notions) as in the case of Byron, all will not be well. That is the danger which I have referred to, the danger that comes of the circumstance that the flame of inspiration may find its point of radiation in the loins or the heart or the head, and re-create in others,

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according to its strength, the sensations, the emotions, or the thoughts of the poet. The poet of personality reproduces himself and puts chains on his offspring. The poet whose literary personality is so great that it goes beyond his human personality, begets true free-born spiritual children endowed with the divine right of quarrelling if necessary with their parent.

It is this stretching beyond the boundaries of the personality that is the safeguard against the dangers of personality in literature. A man's *reality*, according to Tagore, "is measured by the scope of his consciousness;" and since literary expression, because of its ability to fix the mind on a limited and arbitrary range of thoughts and feelings and to give them an exaggerated temporary importance and intensity, is one of the most potent means to the extension of consciousness, the Spirit of Poetry sees to it that, when inspiration dies down, something happens to pull men out of themselves and rekindle the fire of poetry. For a century before Edmund Spenser, English literature was only mumbling echoes in its sleep. But the gates of the world were thrown open by explor-

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ation and discovery, the imagination was thrilled and dilated, and the spacious days of Elizabeth came with Shakespeare and his companions. Such a phrase as that of Ariel in "The Tempest" that he would 'put a girdle round the earth 'in forty minutes' is not only a poet's fancy in elfin play; it is packed with the then new knowledge that the earth is a globe sharing with other worlds the dignity of marching in the celestial procession around the throne of the Sun-God; it is pulsating with the new consciousness of unknown lands and peoples coming into the circle of human relationship.

So too with the literary impulse that opened the nineteenth century and found perhaps its most typical utterance in Wordsworth, of whom William Watson sings,

A hundred years ere he to manhood came,
Song from celestial heights had wandered down,
Put off her robes of sunset, dew and flame,
And doffed a modish dress to please the town.

That is to say, in the interval between the sixteenth century and the nineteenth, English poetry became more and more preoccupied with the trappings of expression than with the substance. The flame of the sun had given way to

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artificial coloured lights, which are the sign of night-time. Then came the French Revolution with its extension of consciousness, and its influence in the work of Wordsworth and Shelley.

To day, after a few years of trifling with the details of literary craftsmanship, and the spending of much time over questions of such immense nothingness as rhyme or no rhyme, we are in the midst of another such extension of consciousness, an extension far beyond anything dreamed of in past times. Heretofore such extensions of consciousness have been on the part of definite sections of the human family who became aware of themselves and others. Now it is as if the entire human race, as the result of the stupendous calamity of the Great War, was being driven against the very ends of the earth and beyond in the impact which that event has made on its consciousness. There is bewilderment and uncertainty on all sides. The stretch towards human unity is marred by upsurges of the old spirit of race prejudice. Unimpeachable sentiments of comradeship and freedom are soiled by acts of national selfishness. Yet these very acts of national selfishness

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are themselves part of the expression of an enlargement of consciousness beyond mere personal interest towards the realisation of a corporate life in the geographical or racial groupings called, nations. Internationalism was never more talked about, its need never more keenly felt. At the same time patriotism has become a passion in many countries, a passion of protest in some cases against voluntary domination by foreign ideals (as Ibsen protested half a century ago against Danish domination of Norwegian drama), in other cases a passion of protest against involuntary domination by foreign institutions, as in India and Ireland.

From the point of view of literary history, the juxtaposition of these two apparently contradictory, but really complementary, phases of human relationship is full of challenging possibilities in literary expression. Hitherto the international note in poetry has been mainly expressive of acquisition on the part of strong nations, and the setting up of relationships based, not on the principle of mutual service, but of self-interest, of which the verse of Rudyard Kipling was once the popular voice. Only the very fewest of the very greatest souls who use

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poetry as their means of expression have sung of the ideal human comradeship. When Tagore prays his prayer for his country, it is not for India alone but for all lands;

Where the mind is without fear, and the head is held high,

Where knowledge is free,

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls,

Where words come out from the depth of truth,

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection,

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit,

Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever widening thought and action,

Into that heaven of freedom, my father, let my country awake.

It may be that these rare spirits will have some accessions to their divinely-inspired company of song; but it is much more likely that the lower and middle heights of poetry will for some time to come resound with the song of patriotism. It is the next natural step away from personality—from love of self to love of country.

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But the patriotic poetry of the new era will be very different from the poetry which has been called patriotic in the past, and the difference will be brought about mainly by the corrective influence of the international ideal on the national, both of which are, as we have noted, brought into a relationship that is without precedent in human history. The patriotic element in ancient Greek literature was unconscious of itself and unaware of others to any noticeable extent. It was patriotic in the sense that it spontaneously used its own speech and imagery and subject-matter. The patriotic poetry of Ireland is an impassioned lyrical protest against alien domination. It sees another nation only as an enemy, and the rest of the world as friends or foes according to their relationship with the primary enemy. It is conscious, but its consciousness is that of fever, not of full health. The patriotic poetry of England is only semi-conscious. Its eyes are where a Hebrew scripture says a fool's eyes are, "in the corners of the earth." It is full of boastfulness, which is inartistic. It is lacking in sensitiveness to the feelings of others, which, according to Ruskin, is the sign of vulgarity.

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The foundations of all such poetry are laid in the shifting sands of selfishness. Instability is its most stable feature. The objectives of its love and hatred must in the nature of things be perpetually changing. When journalists in Europe write of eternal friendship with one nation and everlasting enmity with another, they are uttering foolishness in the laughing face of human history. The spirit of the Prussian Blucher smiles as he recalls how he and the English Wellington defeated the French Napoleon at Waterloo. To-day the relationship is different. Fifteen years hence it may be again different.

It is perfectly legitimate for a person to throw himself into those emotional crises that are never wanting in the evolution of humanity, when enthusiasm and desire are directed to the things that belong to a special country, and to sing them in vibrant song. But the Muse of Poetry will only accept into her family (as children, not as passing relatives) the singers of such song as grasps the fundamental elements in life, the things that make for constantly enlarging unities. Wordsworth, being a poet, sang of the struggles of the early nineteenth century, and his songs

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are for all time because he saw through the things of time to the eternal elements which alone form and nourish the things of time. In contrast with Wordsworth's songs, the patriotic songs of Sir Henry Newbolt produce a little passing excitement in the brain, and leave behind a feeling of sadness over wasted gifts, not because his songs are patriotic, but because they are not patriotic enough. They are mainly exclusive in spirit, and point the way to impoverishment on the higher levels of national life while leading to a fictitious enrichment on the material levels.

In patriotism, as in personality, the flame of poetical inspiration may radiate from the level of selfishness and of contempt or neglect of other nations, and react detrimentally on itself by inducing a counter feeling. A limited patriotism may be exclusive of anything not bearing an agreeable label in special times of emotional stress. The glorious music of the Germany of a century and less ago has been condemned by the unintelligent press of Britain and America. But this is not patriotism, True patriotism brings the gifts of the world and sanctifies them by laying all of them on the

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altar of the motherland. Just as personality only achieves its highest expression when it stretches its consciousness beyond itself, patriotism in poetry can only achieve *its* highest expression when it does the same. A man's reality, as Tagore has said, is measured by the scope of his consciousness, and "his rights are based on his reality." A nation's rights are based on its reality, and its reality is not found in material possessions, in numbers, or in territory, but in the power of the national consciousness to realise by sympathy its place as part of the world consciousness, and yet remain characteristically itself.

Whitman knew this secret, and voiced it with his "barbaric yawp over the housetops." He set himself to no less a task than the creation of a typical American literature, patriotic in the highest degree, literary in the most modern way; and he performed the great paradox of knocking down the walls of patriotism and of literary tradition as a preliminary to the expression of the higher patriotism in literature. He knew the fatal limitations of personality in literature that was personal only, and he transcended those limitations.

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One's self I sing, a simple separate person,
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-
masse.

He visualised America as his theme and also as his audience, yet the past and the future were as much to be the subjects of his poems as the present.

In the name of these States shall I scorn the
antique ?

Why these are the children of the antique to justify
it.

While he sang the body, it was not merely the thing of bone and tissue that he thought of, but the "real body," that which item for item "will elude the corpse cleaners and pass to fitting spheres." His patriotism was vivified, enlarged and glorified by the thrill of the Great Life. Thus he ends his ' Song of the Universal ;'

And thou America,
For the scheme's culmination, its thought and its
reality,

For these (not for thyself) thou hast arrived.

...Thou too surroundest all,

Embracing, carrying, welcoming all, thou too by
pathways broad and new,

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To the ideal tendest.

...The measured faiths of other lands, the grandeurs
of the past,

Are not for thee, but grandeurs of thine own,
Deific faiths and amplitudes, absorbing, compre-
hending all,

All eligible to all,

All, all for immortality,

Love, like the light, silently wrapping all,

Nature's ameliorations blessing all,

The blossoms, fruits of ages, orchards divine and
certain,

Forms, objects, growths, humanities, to spiritual
images ripening.

...Give me O God to sing that thought,

Give me, give him or her I love, this quenchless
faith,

In Thy ensemble, whatever else withheld, with-
hold not from us

Belief in plan of thee enclosed in time and space,

Health, peace, salvation universal.

...Is it a dream ?

Nay but the lack of it the dream,

And, failing it, life's lore and wealth a dream,

And all the world a dream.

The same wider vision characterises the
work of one of the younger Irish writers, T. M.
Kettle, a Professor of the National University

of Ireland, who formerly sat in the British Parliament as an Irish Nationalist, and fell in France leading his men for England against Germany. He was a hearty detester of British rule in Ireland, yet he at once gave himself to Britain when he found her on the side of what he conceived to be the world's freedom. He was an unshakable Nationalist, yet he made it clear that he considered Nationalism to be incomplete without Internationalism. He longed for Ireland to produce a new Goethe who would teach Ireland that "while a strong people has its own self as centre, it has the universe for circumference." When the rebellion took place in Dublin in 1916, Lieutenant Kettle set himself against the revolutionaries because he considered that in what he regarded as their narrowness they had "murdered his dream of an Ireland peopled not only by good Irishmen, but by good Europeans." His patriotism was based on ideas, and it is voiced in a sonnet which has increased significance and poignancy from the fact that he made the supreme sacrifice of his life for an idea a few weeks after he wrote it. The sonnet is addressed to his infant daughter, and runs:

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In wiser days, my darling rosebud, blown
To beauty proud as was your mother's prime,
In that desired, delayed, incredible time,
You'll ask why I abandoned you, my own,
And the dear heart that was your baby throne,
To dice with death. And oh! they'll give you
rhyme

And reason; some will call the thing sublime,
And some decry it in a knowing tone.
So here, while the mad guns curse overhead,
And tired men sigh with mud for couch and floor,
Know that we fools, now with the foolish dead,
Died not for flag, nor King, nor Emperor,
But for a dream, born in a herdman's shed,
And for the secret Scripture of the poor.

The test of patriotism is, indeed, its attitude to the great fundamental human principles, such as justice and liberty. When Hungary struggled last century for freedom from the Austrian yoke she was in line with the irresistible evolutionary movement. But she failed to grant to those within her own borders, such as the Czekhs, the freedom for which she herself struggled, and now her national existence, and with it her literary expression, is covered with the debris of the fallen central empires of Europe, and the Czekhs take upon themselves

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the burden of nationality and its responsibilities.

The true life of a nation is in its imagination, not in its market-places and places of legislation. These are essential, and glorious in their possibilities of human service when the market becomes a holy place for the distribution of the fruits of the earth for the sustenance of humanity, and the legislature is dedicated to a people's highest good. But they lose their value if they are regarded as ends in themselves, for they are truly only the passing shadows cast by limitation from the hidden light of the Divine. The matters of the market-place and the legislature, of national history, national environment, national aspiration, form the subject-matter and the symbolism of literature, but the essence of literature is beneath these surface-characteristics. Literature which depends only on them for its existence will cease to exist. They are the body and the emotions of literature, but they are not its immortal soul. Their celebration without the saving grace of wider human thought will bar the way towards the unfoldment and realisation of the Divine, which is the true human. The great masters of literature

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are translatable into the language of all countries and all ages, not because they renounced patriotism, but because their patriotism was lifted and completed by humanism, sometimes as a conscious *ism*, sometimes as an intuitive anticipation of that which is, to the majority of human beings, a theory, a wild dream, or "a consummation devoutly to be wished." The exiled political offender, Dante, becomes the world-poet because his political enthusiasm was within the circle of his human sympathy, and because his inspiration came from his deeper Self.

"Art," said Emerson, "is the artist's path to realisation of himself"—or words to that effect. But the greatness of the art will depend upon the greatness of the self that is revealed—not the artist's merely physical impulses, or emotional changes, or fluctuating thoughts; but that relatively stable thing at the centre of the artist's being, his or her *self*, which sits close beside the true Self of the great three-in-one, Humanity, Nature, Divinity. The path of progress moves out of the realm of the physical and emotional. We are approaching the intellectual; and the spiritual gives hints that some

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day the general level of poetry will not be very far below that of the rare superlative masters in song now, the masters, whose eyes are not dazzled by the surface-glitter off the picture of life; who see through life to its meaning; whose ears hear not only "the still sad music of humanity," but the deep glad chant of Divinity in humanity; whose thoughts turn ever towards the highest truth and its realisation in life; whose inspiration lifts them above the illusion of historical, geographical and ethnological boundaries; who see the beauty of diversity within these boundaries, but see the boundaries as they truly are, not insurmountable barriers between the groupings of the one human family, but coloured images of varied joy on the tapestry of life, whose design and fulfilment are in the Mind and Heart and Hand of the Divine Artist of the Universe.

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